

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

AHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM  
MAY 5, 2012 13 IYAR 5772  
Day 28 of the Omer  
DEDICATIONS: Happy Birthday Moses

**Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach Schedule and Announcements**  
**Friday Night: Candles: 7:36PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:00 PM**

**Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM**  
**Please say Shemah at home by 8:33 AM**  
**Happy Birthday to Phyllis Wagner.**  
The Kiddush is sponsored by her son Danny, in honor of the occasion.  
**Pirkei Avot with Rabbi Aharon at 6:15 PM**  
**Childrens program at 6:15 with Rabbi Colish**  
**Minha: 7:00 PM**  
**Seudah Shelishi and a Class with Rabbi Aharon 7:35**  
**Evening Service (Arbith): 8:25 PM - Shabbat Ends: 8:36PM**

**This Sunday is Funday and the children will be making a mother's day project.**

## WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

**Shaharit Sunday 8:00,**  
**It seems Sunday, when almost everyone is around is the hardest day to get ten to come on time**  
**Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)**

## WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

**Sunday Morning Halacha with Breakfast 9:00 AM**  
**Kosher Kitchen Series 9:30AM – Led by Rabbi Colish**

**6:30 AM class – Shelah Hakadosh on the Perasha**

**Men's Halacha Class Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30:**  
**Basar BeChalav – With Michael and David**

**"Sephardic Women's Prayer" Tuesday nights. @ 8PM in the Synagogue with Rabbi Colish.**  
**- deep insights, simple translations and a how to guide. CANCELLED THIS WEEK**

**Kiddush Celebrating Dan and Daniella Kahen – Shabbat Shelach LeCha – June 16<sup>th</sup>**  
**Sponsors include: The Yusupov, Azizo, Yadgarov, Mizrahi and Bibi Families**  
**To participate as a sponsor, please speak with Albert Yusupov**

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**Letters to the Editor:**

Dear David.  
Last week's newsletter reminded  
that I've wanted to let you know  
how much we enjoyed the two  
seders. Stan describes them to  
everybody as "wonderful and

magical," which of course they  
were. From my perspective, this  
year was the first time I have ever  
whole-heartedly looked forward to  
the second night! And now a day  
does not go by without warm  
remembrances of Pesach at the  
Sephardic Congregation.  
Please send along our  
appreciation to your so-called  
elves, from Chantelle to Rabbi

Colish, Sam Shetrit, and any  
herein "uncredited" people who  
made these evenings not only  
ones of prayer, storytelling, good  
food, and fun, but also nights  
imbued with the satisfying sense  
of being one big family.  
Shabbat Shalom.  
Chana Gitl Mitrany

## Editors Notes

I recall learning from Rabbi Abittan, z'sl, and I believe it was based on Maimonides, that when faced with the choice of either attending a wedding or a funeral, the funeral normally has priority and that comforting the mourners during the shivah – the week when the family is sitting - takes precedent to going to Sheva Berachot – the week of celebrations of the bride and groom. It may seem somewhat strange that instead of joy, one is sent to seek sadness.

But strangely enough, when Chantelle asked me to come with her to Lakewood last week to make a condolence call it wasn't a place of sadness, rather it was an incredibly uplifting occasion infused with a perfect faith that I will recall for some time.

We were visiting a dear friend of Chantelle, Rebetzin Saucee Garfinkel who was mourning the loss of her husband Rabbi Shlomo Garfinel, z'sl of Far Rockaway with some of her children. I don't recall ever meeting the Rabbi Garfinkel. We arrived at the house, Chantelle walked in, and I heard from the back of the room, "Oh my gosh, Chantelle is here". So she headed towards the woman and I pulled up a chair behind a few men facing the Rabbi's three sons.

I sat and listened to stories of an incredible person. Stories from his students, stories from those he helped, stories from those he attended Yeshiva with, stories of a man devoted to prayer and serving others and stories from his children about their dad. When only I was left, I moved into the seat in front of the mourners and it was just them and me. At first it was a bit awkward. "Who was I", they asked. I introduced

myself. "I'm the driver who brought my wife to visit your mom whom she admires so much. I may have met your dad in passing, but I don't recall ever meeting him and from what I have heard in the last few minutes, I am deeply upset that I didn't know him".

They told me that they realized that if someone knew their father, words could not describe how wonderful he was. At the same time, if one did not know him, words were insufficient to describe him.

I heard about a man who lived and cared for others, often at his own expense. He would never complain, never talk about himself, and never ask for anything. When 95% of your heart is focused on those around you, then there's only 5% left for you. One of his son's told me that when he would call to check on his father, he never got very far, because his father turned the conversation around so that they would talk about anything but him.

Sometimes you remember that teacher who you had as a child and whose influence stays with you forever. You never forget the teacher who really cared and who committed himself 1000% to your success and happiness. Rabbi Garfinkel was that teacher. He was a brilliant scholar who took upon himself to make sure those first few steps would get each child onto the right path as a second grade rebbi. Those who worked with him stated that he had a tremendous impact on the lives of not only the hundreds of students under his tutelage but his colleagues and all who came in contact with him, as well. Rabbi Garfinkel with his warm smile and with his spiritual chesed always shining through his twinkling eyes and warm smile was the righteous

person who did things quietly and always got results.

For some teachers, recess is break time, but not for Rabbi Garfinkel. Each day at recess he would come out with pockets filled with candy and take the time to seek out, to assist and encourage those students who needed it most. He was the toy stores favorite customer, spending his own money on countless prizes and gifts to encourage his talmidim. He maintained relationships with students, years after they left his class and they remained devoted to him.

When he became ill some four and a half years ago, he was concerned as a very private person that his illness would cause others to worry about him. He prayed that his illness should not be on display and was relieved that although he was going through horrific chemo, for some strange reason, his hair did not fall out. As I was reviewing last week's portion it struck me that the Zohar states that when Hashem gives Yisurim Shel Ahava or "afflictions of love", they are given so that they are just outside the view of others. Rebetzin Saucee told me that when he began his chemo they decided to learn a new sefer together. As he was hooked to the machines, she read to him, Sefer Mitzvath ha-Bitachon, Faith and Trust by Rabbi Shmuel Houminer. An inspiring collection of stories, insights, and anecdotes on the subject of trust in G-d, culled from Talmudic, Midrashic, and Rabbinic sources. She told me they went through the book nine times together. And she told me with complete clarity that she knew that whatever Hashem was doing was exactly what each person needed at that moment. Her husband repeated this again and again and even sitting in mourning she said it with

total conviction. And although I imagine that sometimes it was difficult to understand, she was emphatic that they had no question that this was the specific prescription written for them and for their souls.

Sometimes people speak of faith intellectually, sometimes emotionally and often in some abstract form. Here I saw body and soul combined in complete faith. It was amazing. It was inspiring.

Rabbi Abittan once explained that life is dictated by what you focus on. Simply, what you focus on is what you become. Here I saw that principle in Rabbi Garfinkel. What a lesson!

I mourn the fact that I never knew Rabbi Garfinkel. I came that day to drive my wife, and to help fulfill the mitzvah of comforting those in mourning, but I walked out with an incredible gift that I will cherish always.

Tehi Nafsho Serurah BeSror  
HaChayim,  
Shabbat Shalom,  
David Bibi  
PS ... Two articles of interest follow. The first on the tuition crisis and the second on the dangers of television. Let me know what you think.

**Rabbi Ben Greenberg  
Orthodox Jewish Chaplain,  
Harvard University  
The Greatest Challenge Facing  
The Orthodox Jewish  
Community**

The last time a major nationwide survey of American Jewry was conducted was in the year 2000. The National Jewish Population Survey conducted by the Jewish Federations of North America demonstrated some startling statistics that turned on its head prior assumptions about the

Jewish religious community. Whereas, in the previous generation Conservative Judaism was the most dynamic and largest voice in the denominational Jewish spectrum, Orthodoxy in the 2000s had transformed into the fastest growing Jewish movement in America.

In the previous generation, Orthodox Jews were a small minority of the American Jewish demographic and many assumed the entire movement would either disappear or continue on its path towards numerical irrelevancy. In the 2000s the Orthodox Jewish population had skyrocketed to such an extent that among people between the ages of 18-34, the next generation of Jewish leadership, Orthodoxy represented 34 percent of that population. Orthodox Judaism, as of 2000, held a greater percentage of young adults more so than any other denomination in Judaism in existence. The only other grouping to outpace that number were those who identified as unaffiliated.

The Orthodox Jewish community has a lot to be thankful for. It is a thriving and beautiful community of young and old, marrieds and singles, working professionals and retirees and people from all walks of life and backgrounds. In 2010 I wrote about the success of the Orthodox Community for the magazine First Things and much of what I wrote there still holds true two years later. Yet, there is one issue that threatens to undermine the entire system. This is the issue of the affordability of the day school system.

Rabbi Steven Weil, Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union, recently spoke compellingly on this issue to members of the Harvard Jewish community at Harvard Hillel. He presented the stark reality that a

couple earning a salary of \$200,000 living in a New Jersey suburb in a modest home could expect to be asking for financial aid and living paycheck by paycheck once they have more than two children in the day school system. The day schools are not significantly overcharging when they put tuition at \$24-25,000 a year per child. It costs a significant sum of money to maintain a school building, pay for teacher and administrative compensation, school supplies and the myriad of other expenses educational institutions must shoulder. In addition, day schools work very hard to maintain a policy of never turning any child away because of financial constraints so the additional monetary burden of tuition discounts and waivers adds to the difficulties the schools face.

There are many things that we must be doing as a community to address this challenge. The severity of this challenge cannot be overstated. As Rabbi Weil said during his lecture, "A sophisticated Jewish life requires a sophisticated Jewish education." One option that must not be seriously considered is a reduction in the quality of our Jewish education. The curriculum must remain intensive and comprehensive. The pedagogical methods must be able to take advantage of the latest cutting edge advances in student focused learning, digital engagement and other tools. A watered down education could do worse than the opposite of producing a sophisticated adult; it could very well produce a cynical, disconnected adult who is equipped with the most basic and simplistic of a Jewish education.

There are policy actions that could be taken and there are legislative actions that could be taken to help alleviate this issue.

There are also ways in which we can look to reduce costs for some aspects of the functioning of a school. Perhaps some schools could explore a shared health insurance plan that could cut costs for both the institutions and the employees?

In addition, at the most fundamental level, what is called for is deep engagement of the entire community with the schools in our midst. If a community is composed of singles, young couples, families, empty nesters and retirees then we need all five sectors of the population contributing to the schools. All too often, as Rabbi Weil pointed out, the only segment that contributes are the parents themselves and with the financial burden of tuition their ability to take part in charitable giving is significantly reduced. It is understandable that people who do not have children in school or people who just recently finished their parental educational duties or even people enjoying retirement would not place the local day school near the top of their philanthropic priorities. This is understandable but it is wrong. Without strong schools we risk the decline of the vitality, strength, depth and future of our community.

While communal organizations engage in the legislative and policy route, let us engage in the philanthropic route. If you give a certain percentage of your income to charity annually, pledge now to allocate a portion of that to your local day school. There are few centers for Jewish thriving that are as essential as the school and the synagogue. The time has come to appreciate the essential role our schools play in the continuity of the community and to comprehend the precarious situation they find themselves in. The Jewish future of tomorrow depends on the success of our

schools today. We simply cannot afford to ignore that truth any longer.

### **Don't Just Sit There By GRETCHEN REYNOLDS**

ONE lesson I've learned while writing about fitness is that few things impinge on an active life as much as writing about fitness — all that time spent hunched before a computer or puzzling over scientific journals, the countless hours of feckless, seated procrastination. While writing about the benefits of exercise, my muscles slackened. Fat seeped insidiously into my blood, liver and ventricles. Stupor infiltrated my brain.

We all know by now that being inactive is unhealthy. But far too many of us think that being inactive is something that happens to other people.

Studies of daily movement patterns, though, show that your typical modern exerciser, even someone who runs, subsequently sits for hours afterward, often moving less over all than on days when he or she does not work out.

The health consequences are swift, pervasive and punishing. In a noteworthy recent experiment conducted by scientists at the University of Massachusetts and other institutions, a group of healthy young men donned a clunky platform shoe with a 4-inch heel on their right foot, leaving the left leg to dangle above the ground. For two days, the men hopped about using crutches (and presumably gained some respect for those people who regularly toddle about in platform heels). Each man's left leg never touched the ground. Its muscles didn't contract. It was fully sedentary.

After two days, the scientists biopsied muscles in both legs and found multiple genes now being expressed differently in each man's two legs. Gene activity in the left leg suggested that DNA repair mechanisms had been disrupted, insulin response was dropping, oxidative stress was rising, and metabolic activity within individual muscle cells was slowing after only 48 hours of inactivity.

In similar experiments with lab animals, casts have been placed on their back legs, after which the animals rapidly developed noxious cellular changes throughout their bodies, and not merely in the immobilized muscles. In particular, they produced substantially less of an enzyme that dissolves fat in the bloodstream. As a result, in animals and humans, fat can accumulate and migrate to the heart or liver, potentially leading to cardiac disease and diabetes.

To see the results of such inactivity, scientists with the National Cancer Institute spent eight years following almost 250,000 American adults. The participants answered detailed questions about how much time they spent commuting, watching TV, sitting before a computer and exercising, as well as about their general health. At the start of the study, none suffered from heart disease, cancer or diabetes.

But after eight years, many were ill and quite a few had died. The sick and deceased were also in most cases sedentary. Those who watched TV for seven or more hours a day proved to have a much higher risk of premature death than those who sat in front of the television less often. (Television viewing is a widely used measure of sedentary time.)

Exercise only slightly lessened the health risks of sitting. People in the study who exercised for seven hours or more a week but spent at least seven hours a day in front of the television were more likely to die prematurely than the small group who worked out seven hours a week and watched less than an hour of TV a day.

If those numbers seem abstract, consider a blunt new Australian study. In it, researchers determined that watching an hour of television can snip 22 minutes from someone's life. If an average man watched no TV in his adult life, the authors concluded, his life span might be 1.8 years longer, and a TV-less woman might live for a year and half longer than otherwise.

So I canceled our cable, leaving my 14-year-old son staggered. I'd deprived him of his favorite shows on the Food Network, a channel that, combined with sitting, explains much about the American waistline. (Thankfully, my son is blessed with his father's lanky, string-bean physique.)

I also conduct more of my daily business upright. In an inspiring study being published next month in *Diabetes Care*, scientists at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute in Melbourne, Australia, had 19 adults sit completely still for seven hours or, on a separate day, rise every 20 minutes and walk leisurely on a treadmill (handily situated next to their chairs) for two minutes. On another day, they had the volunteers jog gently during their two-minute breaks.

When the volunteers remained stationary for the full seven hours, their blood sugar spiked and insulin levels were out of whack. But when they broke up the hours with movement, even that short

two-minute stroll, their blood sugar levels remained stable. Interestingly, the jogging didn't improve blood sugar regulation any more than standing and walking did. What was important, the scientists concluded, was simply breaking up the long, interminable hours of sitting.

Equally beguiling, at least for me, since I'm shallow, were results from experiments at the University of Massachusetts showing that when volunteers stood all day — nothing else; no walking or jogging; just standing — they burned hundreds more calories than when they sat for the same period of time.

So every 20 minutes or so, I now rise. I don't have a desk treadmill; my office is too small, and my budget too slim. But I prop my papers on a music stand and read standing up. I prowl my office while I talk on the phone. (I also stand on one foot when I brush my teeth at night, which has little to do with reducing inactivity but may be one of the more transformative actions I've picked up from researching fitness. My balance and physical confidence have improved, and my husband is consistently amused, which is not a bad foundation for marital health.)

I run for three or four miles most days, too, and grunt through 20 push-ups most mornings. There are health and fitness benefits from endurance and weight training that standing up can't match. In particular, aerobic workouts have been shown to improve brainpower, and I shudder to imagine the state of my memory if I didn't run. But I'm not planning any marathons (been there, done that, walked down stairs backward for days). I want foundational health. I want my insulin levels in check and my fat-fighting enzymes robust. I

have plans for those extra 18 months of life span that not sitting might provide.

### Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: The service of Yom Kippur that was performed by the Kohain Gadol in the Bais Hamikdash is described. The Kohain Gadol may only enter into the Holy of Holies wearing his plain linen garments requiring that he change his garments five times and immerse in the Mikvah five times. The selection of the he-goats for the primary Teshuva process is described. This portion of the Torah makes up the "Avodah" that is the lengthy Musaf service on Yom Kippur.

2nd Aliya: Following the description of the remaining services for Yom Kippur, the Torah discusses the prohibition of offering a Korban outside of the Mishkan or the Bais Hamikdash. The only offerings allowed were those that were brought to the Temple. The "Bamah", as an outside altar is called, was among the most prevalent sins for which the Jews were guilty.

3rd Aliya: The prohibition against eating blood is repeated. The end of Acharei Mos is devoted to a presentation of the fifteen prohibited sexual relationships. There is no doubt that G-d considers physical intimacy between a male and female as singularly important. Therefore, it is essential that there be a framework of controls for satisfying the physical.

4th Aliya: Homosexuality and bestiality are prohibited. Verses 18: 24-29 clearly state the unique relationship that the inhabitants of Eretz Yisroel have to the land and the consequences for defiling her sanctity. The beginning of Kedoshim states that holiness is realized through keeping

Shabbos, being in awe of one's parents, and not worshipping idols. Laws of charity, honesty, and paying wages on time are stated.

5th Aliya: Showing any deference while administering justice is forbidden as well as our responsibility to properly reprimand each other. The prohibitions against wearing shatnez - any mixture of wool and linen, cutting sideburns (payot) tattooing, premarital sex, and the use of the occult are stated.

6th and 7th Aliya: Proper and equal treatment for the convert, honesty in business, and the prohibition against worshipping the Molech are stated. The remainder of Kedoshim states the specific punishments that Bait Din would administer for engaging in any of the fifteen sexual relationships listed at the end of Acharei Mos.

The very end of Kedoshim (20: 22-26) explains the concept of holiness as the means for being separate from the other nations. Three basic formats for Kedusha exist: Time, place, and person. Acharei Mos began by presenting the ultimate integration of the three in the person of the Kohain Gadol entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. The end of Kedoshim states that Eretz Yisroel (place) the Bnai Yisroel (person) and time in general are intended to reflect the integration of G-dliness into the daily lives of individuals and nations. To the extent that we realize our mission as the kingdom of priests and a holy nation will be the degree to which we retain the right to dwell in the land of Israel.

This week's haftarah Amos 9:7 - presents the Jewish nation in a most unique context. In his last words of prophecy the prophet Amos describes the Jewish people in a very peculiar manner.

He says in the name of Hashem, "Aren't you likened to the Kushites, to be Mine?" (9:7) Who are Kushites and in what way are the Jewish people compared to them? Chazal in the Yalkut Shimoni(157) interpret the term Kushites to refer to the Ethiopian community whose skin color is distinctly different than all other nations. This physical distinction renders it virtually impossible for the Kushites to intermingle with anyone without maintaining their national identity. Chazal continue that in this same manner the Jewish people are distinctly different than all other nations. The moral and ethical code of the observant Jewish people inhibits them from intermingling with the nations of the world. The drastic skin color contrast of the Ethiopians serves as a striking analogy to the drastic ethical contrast between the Jewish people and all other nations.

The prophet continues and reminds the Jewish people that it is this distinct ethical conduct which renders them Hashem's chosen people. After likening the Jewish people to the Kushites, the prophet completes his analogy with the profound words, "to be Mine". The Metzudos Dovid (9:7) explains this to mean that we are Hashem's people exclusively because of our distinguished ethical conduct. He adds that we will remain Hashem's special nation as long as we possess elevated ethical standards. The prophet then draws our attention to our earliest origins and says, "Didn't Hashem bring you up from the land of Egypt?" (ad loc.) Malbim explains that these words allude to the distinguished qualities of the Jewish people in whose merit they were liberated from Egypt. Although they existed for two hundred years in the corrupt and immoral Egyptian environment they remained a distinct and distinguished entity.

Their moral code of dress and speech reflected their pure attitudes about life which made intermingling with the Egyptians a virtual impossibility. For the most part, their Jewish values were not corrupted or distorted which allowed the Jews to remain distinguished and elevated.

The prophet concludes our haftarah with this theme and promises our ultimate redemption from our extended exile. Amos says, "On that day I will establish the kingdom of Dovid.... so that you, upon whom My name rests, will inherit Edom and all nations." (9:11,12) Our identity with Hashem as a nation upon whom His name rests, will play a significant role in our final redemption. The Jewish people will inherit their archenemy Edom solely because of their identity with Hashem. Our elevated standards of morality will truly earn us the title of His people and in this merit we will be finally liberated from the world's corrupt influence and environment.

This special lesson reflects the essence of this week's parsha, Kedoshim, which embodies Hashem's lofty call to us for spiritual elevation. The Torah begins and says, "Be holy for I, Hashem, am Holy." (Vayikra 19:2) Nachmanides (ad loc.) shares with us his classic insight into this mitzva. "Be holy", says the Ramban, "refers to the introduction of sanctity and spirituality into every dimension of our lives." Even our physical and mundane activities should be directed towards Hashem. We are forbidden to excessively indulge in worldly pleasures and are expected to limit our passions and pleasures to productive and accomplishing acts. Morality and spirituality should encompass our entire being and our every action should ultimately become the service of Hashem. This

philosophy is diametrically opposed to that of the nations of the world. To them physical pleasure and enjoyment have no restrictions or limitations and religion does not govern their passions or cravings. As said, our standards of morality are truly unique and it is this factor that elevates us and distinguishes us from amongst the nations of the world.

The parsha concludes with this message and says, "And you shall be holy unto Me for I am holy and I have separated you from the nations to be Mine." As stated, we are Hashem's people because of our holiness -elevated moral and ethical standards - which truly separate us from the nations of the world. And in this merit we will soon experience our final redemption and be a nation unto Him, privileged to remain in His presence for eternity.

#### **EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN**

**Rabbi Reuven Semah**

**"You shall not place a stumbling block in front of a blind person and you shall have fear of G-d." (Vayikra 19:14)**

A story told by Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Reinman that didn't happen, but could very well happen: A farmer was having financial difficulties. His crops were failing. His equipment was falling apart and he had no money to buy new equipment or even to repair the old. His family was hungry and creditors were pounding on his door day and night. In desperation, the farmer approached a distant cousin and asked him for a substantial loan.

"I could lend you the money," said the cousin, "but what good would it do you? You're running a losing operation.

A loan will just get you through your present tight spot, but in a few months you'll be back where you are now, and you will also have the pressure of repaying the loan. I think your best course of action would be to sell your farm. It's a good piece of land, and you could probably get a decent price. You'll be able to pay off all your debts and have enough left over to buy a taxi. You'll be able to provide a decent living for your family and you won't have to worry about so many things that are beyond your control."

The land had been in the farmer's family for generations, and he was very upset. But he could not argue with his cousin's logic, and he put his farm on the market. A broker representing an unnamed client bought it at a bargain price. The unnamed client was none other than the cousin. He had advised the farmer to sell his ancestral homestead and he himself had snapped it up as soon as it went on the market.

This scheming cousin violated the sin of "You shall not put an obstacle in front of a blind person." The farmer's cousin put an obstacle in the way of his friend as surely as if he tripped a blind man. But, the verse continues, "And you shall fear your Lord". Why does this prohibition require this additional warning?

Rashi explains: It is not so discernable to people whether this man had good or bad intentions and he can excuse himself and say, 'I meant well.' Therefore he is told, 'You shall fear your Lord.' And why are we so concerned about what other people think? Perhaps we can say that the Torah is not really talking about the perpetrator's excuses to other people, but

about the excuses he makes to himself. In our case, it is quite possible that the cousin would never dream of stabbing his relative in the back, but he covets the farmland and would love to have it for himself. So what does he do? He convinces himself that the farmer is a complete incompetent incapable of running the farm. He convinces himself that the farmer would be better off driving a taxi for a living than running a farm. It may be that he truly had the cousin's welfare in mind, or it could be that the whole chain of reasoning was a lie. Therefore, says the Torah, you may be able to fool yourself, but you cannot fool Hashem. Probe your heart honestly and think into what you are about to do before you do it. Shabbat Shalom

**Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

**"Do not take revenge or bear a grudge" (Vayikra 19:18)**

We are all familiar with the concept of revenge. If someone does evil to us or holds back a favor from us, we are not permitted to retaliate on the basis of his action. Rather, we must try to help out the person regardless of what he did to us. The second half of the verse is not as well known but equally important. Do not bear a grudge means that if someone holds back something from us, we are not allowed to remind him of it even if we do him the favor. We may not say, "I'll lend you this item even though you didn't lend me the thing I asked you for." The Rambam says we are supposed to go even one step further and not have his refusal in our mind when we do him the favor. This takes a clear understanding that what happens to us is from Hashem. Even though that individual refused to do me a favor, as far as I am concerned, it wasn't from him but from Hashem. Therefore I will do

him the favor and not even remember his refusal. Although this is definitely not an easy task, if one accomplishes this commandment, he will reinforce his faith in Hashem and it will give him the peace of mind which comes with the faith and trust in Hashem.

### RABBI ELI MANSOUR

#### A Group Effort

Parashat Kedoshim begins with the command "Kedoshim Tiheyu," requiring us to strive for "Kedusha" – "holiness." What exactly does "holiness" mean, and how are we to go about pursuing it?

When a couple gets married, the groom says to the bride, "Hareh At Mekudeshet Li," declaring that she is "Mekudeshet." This does not mean that she is "holy" or spiritual because she is marrying him. Rather, it means that she is set apart and designated exclusively for him. Likewise, when a person would consecrate an animal as a sacrifice in the times of the Bet Hamikdash, he would declare the animal as "Hekdesh." He set this animal apart from other animals in the world, making it different and distinct. "Kadosh" essentially means "different." When the Torah commands us to be "holy," it means that we are to be different and distinct from other people in the world. We must live on a higher standard and with a different set of principles and priorities. The nature and direction of our lives must be fundamentally different from that of other people.

Before God presented the laws of this Parasha to Moshe, He instructed that they must be spoken to "Kol Adat Beneh Yisrael" – the entire nation. Whereas other Misvot of the Torah were first transmitted to the

leaders who then taught them to the rest of the nation, these laws were presented at an assembly of all Beneh Yisrael. The reason, perhaps, is because "holiness" can only be pursued in a large group, together with other people. "Kedusha," as we explained, means being different and separate, going against the tide and conventional modes of behavior. It is very difficult for individuals to swim against the tide. We are all influenced by the society around us, and easily fall prey to the pressure and intimidation of the majority. Very few people are able to resist this pressure alone. The best chance we have of achieving "Kedusha," of being able to remain distinct and go against the tide, is in a group, working together with like-minded people. The Misva of "Kedoshim Tiheyu" was issued at a national assembly, because only when the nation works together can "Kedusha" be achieved.

This is especially true nowadays, when the decadent, base culture of the general society is so pervasive. Wherever we go, we find ourselves bombarded by the culture and values of the general society, which are diametrically opposed to those of the Torah. In order to resist this pressure, we need the support of our peers. And for this reason, it is crucial for everyone to find a framework – such as a regular Torah class – in which he or she is surrounded by others who seek Kedusha, who wish to be different from the society around us. We cannot go about this ambitious endeavor alone; we need the strength and support of a group working together to resist the tide. Only if we work together as a group can we succeed in our attempt to achieve true "holiness," and conduct our lives on a higher moral standard so that we are

worthy of a meaningful relationship with our Creator.

### Rabbi Wein

The direct message of these two parshiyot is clear: In order to live a meaningful life that contains within it the necessary elements of spiritual sanctity one must limit one's desires and physical behavior patterns. The Torah does not award accolades for great intellectual or social achievements if they are unfortunately accompanied by uninhibited physical dissolute behavior. It is not only the message that counts – it is just as much the messenger as well.

There are many laws, mitzvot and strictures that are the stuff of these two Torah parshiyot. The Talmud warns us against the dangers of false preaching and hypocrisy. All faiths and political systems are strewn with the remains of noble ideas preached by ignoble people and dissolute leaders. The Torah is therefore prescient in demanding that Jews must first dedicate themselves to the goals of righteousness and probity before it instructs them in the details of Jewish living and normative behavior.

The Torah is wary of those who immerse themselves in purifying waters while still retaining in their hands, hearts and minds the defiling creature itself. The Torah is keen to apply this concept to its entire worldview. Justice is to be pursued but only through just means. The Jewish nation is not only to be an obedient and observant nation – it is charged with being a holy nation. Without the goal of personal holiness being present in Jewish life, observance of the Torah laws oftentimes will be ineffective, a matter of rote behavior and not of spiritual uplift and improvement.



This required dedication to holiness in life is achieved in the small, every day occurrences in human life. It defines how we speak and what we say and hear. It prevents us from taking advantages of others in commerce and social relationships. It fights against our overwhelming ego and our narcissistic self. Holiness opens up to us the broad panorama of life and allows us to view the forest and not just the trees.

It demands inspiration and makes us feel unfulfilled if we achieve only knowledge. It creates a perspective of eternity and of future generations and lifts us out of the mundane world of the ever-changing present. It infuses our behavior with a sense of cosmic importance and eternal value so that everything in life, in fact living itself, is of spiritual importance and value.

It impresses upon us the realization that we are not only to be judged by our current peers but by past and future generations as well. Even achrei mot – after one's departure from this world – kedoshim tihyu – shall later generations be able to judge one as being holy, dedicated and noble. This is the mindset that the Torah demands from us as we proceed to fulfill all of the laws and mitzvot that are detailed for us in these two parshiyot. For in the absence of such a dedication and mindset, the perfunctory observance of those laws and mitzvot cannot have the necessary effect upon our souls and lives.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks  
Chief Rabbi of the United  
Hebrew Congregations  
of the Commonwealth**

### **The Scapegoat**

The strangest element of the service on Yom Kippur, set out in Acharei Mot (Lev. 16: 7-22), was the ritual of the two goats, one offered as a sacrifice, the other sent away into the desert "to Azazel." They were brought before the High Priest, to all intents and purposes indistinguishable from one another: they were chosen to be as similar as possible to one another in size and appearance. Lots were drawn, one bearing the words "To the Lord," the other, "To Azazel." The one on which the lot "To the Lord" fell was offered as a sacrifice. Over the other the high priest confessed the sins of the nation and it was then taken away into the desert hills outside Jerusalem where it plunged to its death. Tradition tells us that a red thread would be attached to its horns, half of which was removed before the animal was sent away. If the rite had been effective, the red thread would turn to white.

Sin and guilt offerings were common in ancient Israel, but this ceremony was unique. Normally confession was made over the animal to be offered as a sacrifice. In this case confession was made over the goat not offered as a sacrifice. Why the division of the offering into two? Why two identical animals whose fate, so different, was decided by the drawing of a lot? And who or what was Azazel?

The word Azazel appears nowhere else in Scripture, and three major theories emerged as to its meaning. According to the sages and Rashi it meant "a steep, rocky or hard place," in other words a description of its destination. According to Ibn Ezra (cryptically) and Nahmanides (explicitly), Azazel was the name of a spirit or demon, one of the fallen angels referred to in Genesis 6:2, similar to the goat-

spirit called Pan in Greek mythology, Faunus in Latin. The third interpretation is that the word simply means "the goat [ez] that was sent away [azal]." Hence the English word "(e)scapegoat" coined by William Tyndale in his 1530 English translation of the Bible.

Maimonides offers the most compelling explanation, that the ritual was intended as a symbolic drama: "There is no doubt that sins cannot be carried like a burden, and taken off the shoulder of one being to be laid on that of another being. But these ceremonies are of a symbolic character, and serve to impress men with a certain idea, and to induce them to repent; as if to say, we have freed ourselves of our previous deeds, have cast them behind our backs, and removed them from us as far as possible" (Guide for the Perplexed, III:46). This makes sense, but the question remains. Why was this ritual different from all other sin or guilt offerings? Why two goats rather than one?

The simplest answer is that the High Priest's service on Yom Kippur was intended to achieve something other and more than ordinary sacrifices occasioned by sin. The Torah specifies two objectives, not one: "On this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins" (Lev. 16: 30). Normally all that was aimed at was atonement, kapparah. On Yom Kippur something else was aimed at: cleansing, purification, teharah. Atonement is for acts. Purification is for persons. Sins leave stains on the character of those who commit them, and these need to be cleansed before we can undergo catharsis and begin anew.

Sin defiles. King David felt stained after his adultery with Batsheva: "Wash me thoroughly of my iniquity and cleanse me of my sin" (Psalm 51: 4). Shakespeare has Macbeth say, after his crime, "Will these hands ne'er be clean?" The ceremony closest to the rite of the scapegoat – where an animal was let loose rather than sacrificed – was the ritual for someone who was being cleansed of a skin disease:

If they have been healed of their defiling skin disease, the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the person to be cleansed. Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. He is then to take the live bird ... And he is to release the live bird in the open fields. (Lev. 14: 4-7)

The released bird, like the scapegoat, was sent away carrying the impurity, the stain. Clearly this is psychological. A moral stain is not something physical. It exists in the mind, the emotions, the soul. It is hard to rid oneself of the feeling of defilement when you have committed a wrong, even when you know it has been forgiven. Some symbolic action seems necessary. The survival of such rites as Tashlikh, the "casting away" of sins on Rosh Hashanah, and Kapparot, "expiations" on the eve of Yom Kippur – the first involving crumbs, the second a live chicken – is evidence of this. Both practices were criticized by leading halakhic authorities yet both survived for the reason Maimonides gives. It is easier to feel that defilement has gone if we have had some visible representation of its departure. We feel cleansed once we see it go somewhere, carried by something. This may not be

rational, but then neither are we, much of the time.

That is the simplest explanation. The sacrificed goat represented kapparot, atonement. The goat sent away symbolised teharah, cleansing of the moral stain. But perhaps there is something more, and more fundamental, to the symbolism of the two goats.

The birth of monotheism changed the way people viewed the world. In polytheism, the elements, each of which is a different god with a different personality, clash. In monotheism, all tension – between justice and mercy, retribution and forgiveness – is located within the mind of the One God. The sages often dramatised this, in Midrash, as a dialogue between the Attribute of Justice [middat ha-din] and the Attribute of Compassion [middat rachamim]. With this single shift, external conflict between two separate forces is reconceptualised as internal, psychological conflict between two moral attributes.

This led to a reframing of the human situation. Jack Miles says something profoundly interesting about the difference between Greek and Shakespearian tragedy: The classic Greek tragedies are all versions of the same tragedy. All present the human condition as a contest between the personal and the impersonal with the impersonal inevitably victorious . . . Hamlet is another kind of tragedy . . . The contest is unlike that between doomed, noble Oedipus and an iron chain of events. It is, instead, a conflict within Hamlet's own character between 'the native hue of resolution' and 'the pale cast of thought'.

Monotheism relocates conflict from 'out there' to 'in here', transferring it from an

objective fact about the world to an internal contest within the mind. This flows from our belief in God but it changes our view of the soul, the self, the human personality. It is no coincidence that the struggle between Jacob and Esau, which begins in the womb and brings their relationship to the brink of violence, is resolved only when Jacob wrestles alone at night with an unnamed adversary – according to some commentators, a portrayal of inner, psychological struggle. The next day, Jacob and Esau meet after a twenty-two year separation, and instead of fighting, they embrace and part as friends. If we can wrestle with ourselves, the Bible seems to suggest, we need not fight as enemies. Conflict, internalized, can be resolved.

In most cultures, the moral life is fraught with the danger of denial of responsibility. "It wasn't me. Or if it was, I didn't mean it. Or I had no choice." That, in part, is what the story of Adam and Eve is about. Confronted by their guilt, the man blames the woman, the woman blames the serpent. Sin plus denial of responsibility leads to paradise lost.

The supreme expression of the opposite, the ethic of responsibility, is the act of confession. "It was me, and I offer no excuses, merely admission, remorse, and a determination to change." That in essence is what the High Priest did on behalf of the whole nation, and what we now do as individuals and communities, on Yom Kippur.

Perhaps then the significance of the two goats, identical in appearance yet opposite in fate, is simply this, that they are both us. The Yom Kippur ritual dramatised the fact that we have within us two inclinations, one good (yetser tov), one bad (yetser

hara). We have two minds, one emotional, one rational, said Daniel Goleman in Emotional Intelligence. Most recently Daniel Kahneman has shown how the same duality affects decision-making in Thinking, Fast and Slow. It is the oldest and newest duality of all.

The two goats – the two systems, the amygdala and prefrontal cortex – are both us. One we offer to God. But the other we disown. We let it go into the wilderness where it belongs and where it will meet a violent death. Ez azal: the goat has gone. We have relinquished the yetser hara, the instinct-driven impetuosity that leads to wrong. We do not deny our sins. We confess them. We own them. Then we let go of them. Let our sins, that might have led us into exile, be exiled. Let the wilderness reclaim the wild. Let us strive to stay close to God.

Monotheism created a new depth of human self-understanding. We have within us both good and evil. Instinct leads to evil, but we can conquer evil, as God told Cain: "Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you can master it" (Gen. 4: 6). We can face our faults because God forgives, but God only forgives when we face our faults. That involves confession, which in turn bespeaks the duality of our nature, for if we were only evil we would not confess, and if we were wholly good we would have nothing to confess. The duality of our nature is symbolized by the two identical goats with opposite fates: a vivid visual display of the nature of the moral life.

Hence a supreme irony: the scapegoat of Acharei Mot is the precise opposite of the scapegoat as generally known. "Scapegoating," as we use the word today, means blaming

someone else for our troubles. The scapegoat of Yom Kippur existed so that this kind of blame would never find a home in Jewish life. We do not blame others for our fate. We accept responsibility. We say mipnei chata-enu, "because of our sins."

Those who blame others, defining themselves as victims, are destined to remain victims. Those who accept responsibility transform the world, because they have learned to transform themselves.

### **AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL**

#### **"And you should love your fellowman as yourself" (19:18)**

If such is the obligation toward one fellow Israelite, then how vastly must we love the entire people of Hashem! This intense love for our people, and even for a single one of our nation, actually is included in the command of "You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart" (Devarim 6:5), "for Hashem your G-d loves you" (ibid. 23:6), and "I love you, said Hashem" (Malachi 1:2). "Yes, I loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3).

The commandment "I am Hashem your G-d" (Shemot 20:2) means also "Think as I think!" If you love Me, you must love my people, and each individual of My people. This is included in the words "Holy shall you be, for I Hashem your G-d am holy", which means that you should emulate Me. "And you should walk in His ways" (Devarim 28:9). The Holy Scriptures express the thoughts of Hashem (as He wishes to reveal to men); And these Scriptures speak solely about Hashem's people and nothing else. Therefore this verse: "And you should love your

fellowman as yourself" "is a great principle of the Torah" (Yerushalmi Nedarim 9:4) and is an essential corollary of "You shall love Hashem your G-d."

The Sacred Scriptures state clearly that the seed of Israel, meaning the loyal Jews of today and of all generations, are G-d's beloved people (Devarim 7:8, 23:6, 1 Kings 10:9, Yeshaya 43:4, Yirmiya 31:2, II Chronicles 2:10, Malachi 1:2,,,) Those who choose to identify themselves with the loyal Jewish people are here intended. And when we endeavor to love them more, Hashem in like measure loves Us more. "And I shall bless those that bless you" (Beresheet 12:3).

#### **"You shall be holy for I Hashem Your G-d am holy". 19:2**

Fundamentally this means: 'Think as I Think'. The most important part of the personality is the mind. Therefore we can most effectively emulate the holiness of Hashem by means of emulating His thoughts. Everything in the Torah is an example of Hashem's thoughts, as He wishes us to think. Therefore we study His words in order to acquire (what He shows us to be) His attitudes.

He regards Man as "the image of G-d" (Beresheet 1:27), and we should train our minds to think likewise. He considers the people of Israel as His sons (Devarim 14:1), and we must gain that same attitude. He desires kindness (Shemot 36:6; Michah 7:18) and so should we. He hates immorality (Sanhedrin 93A), and so should we. He considers His world as "Very Good" (Beresheet 1:31), and so should we.

Quoted from "A Kingdom of Cohanim" by Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT"L