

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

AHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM

Haftarah: Yehezkel 20:2-20

MAY 6, 2017 10 IYAR 5777

DEDICATION: In memory of Dorothy Ritholtz A'H

Happy Birthday Moses !

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Editors Notes

Identical Goats on Different Paths Speaks of Us

The first Aliyah of Acharei Mot which we read on Shabbat afternoon and Monday morning and which we will read again on Thursday morning and Shabbat and again on Yom Kippur describes what is perhaps the strangest and most dramatic element of the Avodah – the priestly service on Yom Kippur. It is the ritual of the two goats brought to the High Priest who randomly places lots on each where one will be offered as a sacrifice and the other sent away into the desert "to Azazel." The rabbis explain that these two goats were for all intents and purposes indistinguishable from one another. The Talmud teaches that they were chosen to be as similar as possible in size and appearance. Then lots are drawn and although they start out identical, their fates are as drastically different as can be. The one on which the lot "To the L-rd" fell was offered as a sacrifice. One is literally LeHashem – To Hashem and his blood is sprinkled within the Holy of Holies. The other may think that he has been spared, and although his twin went for a Holy cause, at least he gets to live. But then the second stands as the Kohen Gadol confessed the sins of the nation. He is then taken away into the desert hills outside Jerusalem. Perhaps again he thinks, they are sending me to freedom to roam these hills in peace. Standing on the cliff, he looks out at his new domain and appreciates his luck. If this goat had any idea of why he was being taken to this rocky cliff, he would not be thinking anything close to these thoughts. Poor goat, if he only knew that he would end up being tossed off the mountainside into the sharp stones below, he would never think himself lucky.

First let us consider the the lesson offered by the great, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch who explains that the two goats represent the choices each one of us makes every day of our lives. Two may start out exactly the same, but their fates based on their choices may be polar opposites. We decide to follow

the right path which may appear more difficult or the easy path which may appear to be paved and easily crossed. Some of us choose the moral path and we accept that it comes with sacrifices. We assist others and give charity even though it appears that by giving up our time and money, we lose. Religiously, we may choose to observe the laws of Kashrut which means we'll be spending more on food and have considerably less choices. Compare this first individual to the one who chooses a life free from religious or moral rules. He gets to relish in what he sees as a life of earthly indulgences without restriction. He thinks this will bring him joy and happiness, yet we see that forgetting even his end, that most that chose this path don't even enjoy the initial contentment which eventually loses its appeal.

Rabbi Hirsch explains the word Azazel as a contraction of az azel - strength departs. The hedonistic path will in the end bring us neither bliss nor contentment, but it will eventually zap our strength. He cautions us to endeavor to direct our energies and resources to holier quests which are a guaranteed investment for the future.

This is a beautiful lesson, but as I reviewed this on the morning we commemorate yom hazikaron ("Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers of Israel and Victims of Terrorism" is Israel's official Remembrance Day, enacted into law in 1963), I had a second thought. When I said the Hashkava this morning for one man's brother who died in the Six Day War of 67 and another man's friend who died in the Yom Kippur war of 73, the thought of the two who begin the same yet follow different paths struck me. Although Rav Hirsch divides them because of choices made, the thought that the goats had no choice and were selected by lottery or Heaven yielded this second perspective.

I still recall the first time, more than thirty years ago when we were working on the Hilton Hotel and spent a weekend in Tel Aviv and prayed in the Aleppo Synagogue which was near the hotel. On one of the walls was a memorial to fallen soldiers. Although I didn't know a single one of those who had fought for the Jewish people and gave his life for the cause, I knew every one of their names. The names on the wall were the exact same names as those of my dearest friend and relatives. There were Gindis and

Tawils and Kassins and Suttons and Cohens and Dwecks. And I stood there, not much older than most of those boys on that wall when they gave their lives. And whether I knew them or not, those boys are and will always be my cousins, my friends and my brothers. Hashem may have sent us on different paths, but there is no question that we are the same. And as a cousin, a friend and a brother, I mourn their deaths as I do each of the soldiers who gave their life for me and for us.

I spoke with my son Moses this morning as he was returning from a service on Har Herzl. Mount Herzl has been the site of the main Israeli Defense Forces cemetery since 1949, with graves and memorials dedicated to soldiers who have fallen in the line of duty since Israel's 1948 War of Independence. He told me of the many people there today and he stopped to sit and speak with an older woman as she sat by her son's grave. She told him all about her son and he was sure that in listening to her, she was in some ways comforted from some of the deep pain she must feel every day of her life.

When we would ask Rabbi Abittan z'tl, about traveling the world to visit the graves of the righteous, he would quote the Rishon LeSiyon. Rav Ovadia Yosef z'sl who would ask why travel the world, quoting the Gadol HaDor, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach who would stand across from the national cemetery on Mt. Herzl and say: "These are the graves of the righteous who died sanctifying Hashem's Name."

Although by the time you read this, Memorial Day will be over and we will have celebrated Yom HaAtzmaut, when we read of the two goats on Shabbat, the two twin goats separated by lottery, we should not only be reminded to make sacrificial choices as Rav Hirsch suggests, we should be reminded of the sacrifices our brothers have made and continue to make for us. This period as Rav Ovadia writes, should not only serve as a day to mourn our fallen soldiers whose death is as painful to us as the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash, but it should also serve as a time of self-introspection (Isn't this what the Omer is about?). We must strive to uphold the traditions of our ancestors by returning to the Torah as the verse states, "Return to Me and I shall return to you." So many of our fallen brethren have made the ultimate sacrifice in order to ensure the continuation of our nation, a nation dedicated to Torah and Mitzvos. Where is our sacrifice?

If we had iPhones in those days, I would have certainly taken an image of the wall in the Synagogue in Tel Aviv and placed it by my desk as a reminder. If

perhaps one of you has an image, please send it to me. May Hashem avenge their blood and may their souls stand, each as a melitz yashar; an advocate for us, their brothers and sisters, cousins and friends, in the Heavenly courts. May Hashem end our pain and bring Mashiach Bimhera NeYameynu, Amen!

Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

PS: Requires Further Study

So how did your Synagogue handle prayers this past Monday and Tuesday? I have been asked what I would do, what I did and then why I did it. So for those I have not answered yet, here goes.

On Monday, Israel commemorated Yom HaZikaron – Memorial Day and on Tuesday Israel celebrated Yom HaAtzmaut – Israel Independence Day. This was in spite of the fact that Monday was the Fifth of Iyar, the traditional day of Yom HaAtzmaut, The celebration was pushed forward based on the recommendations of the chief rabbinate as the rabbis realized that whenever Yom Ha'atzmaut fell on a Monday, the preparations for Yom Hazikaron – which would then begin on Motzai Shabbat – would inevitably result in a considerable amount of chilul Shabbat (Shabbat desecration).

The Chief Rabbinate ruled that when the 5th of Iyar falls on either Friday or Shabbat, Yom Ha'atzmaut should be advanced to the preceding Thursday with Yom HaZikaron, the day before – Wednesday.

When I looked into this I saw that the 5th of Iyar can only fall out on one of the following days: Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Shabbat. This means that three out of four years, the memorial day and celebration day are moved.

So the question we must deal with is this. Is the date on the calendar more important or is it the day we set aside to celebrate? We know there are a number of precedents of the rabbis postponing or advancing holidays and how we handle holidays including Purim and more specifically Shushan Purim falling on Shabbat, Rosh Hashana which falls on Shabbat as well as Sukkot which falls on Shabbat.

I believe that we can presume that the day's significance is derived from the Chief Rabbinate's decree and therefore the same decree should give credence to any further amendments such as pushing the day forward as we did this year or pushing it back. I believe that the acceptance of the decree of the Rabbinate to change the date indicates that the State of Israel accepts that we must refrain

from desecrating Shabbat and is a wonderful Kiddush Hashem.

What I did not understand is a ruling of the Chief Rabbinate about 13 years ago stating that in a year like this one when we pushed everything forward. They stated that although we say Hallel on Tuesday, still on the 5 Iyar, Monday, we would not recite Tachanun during the Tefillah.

The next issue is how we celebrate outside the land when we don't have the problem of preparing on Saturday and Chillul Shabbat. Do we follow the traditional dates or those Israel follows? It seems the American Rabbinate felt we do not coincide with Israel.

In our analysis and after discussing with a number of rabbis, I felt as you can see from my article above that we should celebrate with Israel when Israel celebrates. Furthermore based on what the grandson and disciple of Maran Rav Ovadia zt"l, Rabbi Yaakov Sasson Shlit"a wrote of Yom HaZikaron/Memorial Day, I was not happy with skipping tachanun. Halacha Yomit notes that this day should not only serve as a day to mourn our fallen soldiers whose death is as painful to us as the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash, but it should also serve as a day of self-introspection. With this in mind and after speaking with a number of rabbis versed in Sod who I knew would stress the importance and benefits of tachanan especially on Monday, I couldn't fathom skipping Tachanun on Monday.

So on Monday we mourned with those in Israel with a special Hashkava for the soldiers especially given that we had a number of people with us who lost relatives and friends fighting. On Tuesday we celebrated adding Hallel with song at the end of our Tefillah.

How we celebrate and commemorate will probably be up for debate for years to come, but I look forward to when we will have developed a more unified custom and approach.

Looking forward to the comments I am sure I will get.

Summary of the Perasha

Acharey Mot - The Yom Kippur Service, Forbidden Relations

- 1- The order of the Kohen in the Yom Kippur service (clothes, washing, lottery, incense, sprinkling blood, viduy, slaughtering)
- 2- The service of the Kohen on Yom Kippur in regards to the seir le'azazel

3- The commandment to observe Yom Kippur (resting from work and afflicting ourselves)

4- The issur of bringing a korban outside the azara

5- Laws regarding blood (the issur of eating blood, the mitzvah of covering the blood)

6- Laws of Arayot - Who is assur to us

7- Laws of Arayot - Severity of the sin and what the punishment is

Kedoshim - Holiness regarding the Jewish people (51 Mitsvot)

1- Kedoshim tihui, fearing parents, idol worship, pigool, lechet, shichecha, pe'ah, stealing, lying, false witness, withholding wages, cursing, placing a stumbling block...

2- Preventing judgement, rechiloot, hating your brother in your heart, admonishing your fellow, taking revenge or having a grudge, love your fellow as yourself, kilayim, ...

3- Orlah, lo tochloo al ha'dam, destroying the hair of your beard, tatoos, harlotry, fearing the sanctuary, sorcery, standing for a seyba and zaken, being honest in weights and measures...

4- Don't harass the convert, don't distort justice in regards to weights and measures

5- The punishment for one who worships the avoda zara of molech and raising souls through ovot or yid'onim

6- The punishment for the forbidden relationships mentioned in Acharey Mot

7- The promise from Hashem that if we go in his ways and separate from unkosher food and illicit relations he will bless us with a land of milk and honey

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"Like the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled do not do." (Vayikra 18:3)

In this week's perashah we find the Jews journeying in the desert. They have not yet developed a national character, nor do they have a country. For now they are traveling from one country, Egypt, to another, Canaan. They are being warned severely against emulating the national character of either. The Jews are expected to develop a national character from the Torah, and then live by it in their own country, Eress Yisrael.

The verse above tells the Israelites not to emulate the lifestyle of Egypt or Canaan. Why is it necessary to mention Egypt? Why not just say: "Don't do such and such misdeeds"?

Rabbi Yaakov Haber explains that the answer can be found in Rashi. "Because Egypt was the most immoral and depraved country among the nations." Why mention Canaan? Rashi again

provides the answer: "Because the seven nations of Canaan were even more immoral and depraved than the Egyptians!"

But, if the Jews are supposed to be the "light unto the nations," it seems they are starting off with quite a handicap, considering where they were coming from and where they were going. If G-d wanted them to be so great, why didn't He supply them with a more conducive atmosphere to holiness, instead of taking them from bad to worse?

The answer to this problem lies in the very way Jewish history unfolds. We are compared to a rose among the thorns. Because of our exiles we were flung to some of the most morally depraved areas of the world. It was there that we were truly challenged to demonstrate our commitments to Torah. It was there we had to search deep within ourselves to find the essence as our souls, it was that exercise that made us grow.

Often, our growth takes place, not in spite of a diverse situation but because of it. Maybe that's why, right from the start we were surrounded with challenges so that we can rise like a rose amongst the moral thorns of the society in which we live.
Rabbi Reuven Semah

"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 Shmuel Choueka

"Everything is foreseen." (Abot 3:15)

Instead of Tzafui, foreseen, it should have said "known" or "seen".

The word Tzafui can mean floating. When one floats on the water, he makes an effort to keep his head upwards. The Mishnah is teaching that throughout his lifetime in this world, a person should imagine himself as floating in the ocean, so that to survive he must look upwards, look to Hashem and be attached to Him. (Vedibarta Bam)

Rav Kook on The Perasha

When visiting Israel, please take time to visit – Beit HaRav – The And it is not only to be a museum, but a live place for Torah learning. Rabbi Kook's home was left by the donor who purchased it for him, to "those who continue in his ways." When the flagship religious Zionist Merkaz Harav yeshiva outgrew the house, it moved to a new building in Kiryat Moshe, but a kollel of post IDF Merkaz HaRav students headed by Rabbi Avraham Sylvetsky, has been studying Torah every evening in the revered rabbi's Beit Midrash since last year, with plans for spiritual outreach work aimed at the young people who frequent the center of town where Beit Harav is located.

Acharei Mot: The Ox and the Goat

There are many unique aspects to the Temple service on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. One special feature of Yom Kippur concerns the chatat sin-offerings. On all other holidays, a single sin-offering was brought, from a goat. On Yom Kippur, however, there were two sin-offerings: an ox and a goat.

What is the significance of these two animals, the ox and the goat?

Forgiveness for All Actions

The ox is a symbol of great strength. Oxen were traditionally used for construction and cultivating land. The ox's strength was harnessed to till the earth, to transport goods, and other constructive purposes. The goat is also a symbol of power — but of a corrosive, destructive nature. The Hebrew word for goat (sa'ir) means to storm and rage. The foraging goat devours the very roots of the plants. Overgrazing by goats leads to land-erosion and destruction of pasture.

Both of these forms of power — constructive and destructive — may be used for positive goals, and both may be utilized for evil purposes. Each has its proper place and time. We use constructive forces to build and advance, and we need destructive forces when dismantling existing structures in order to

rebuild and improve. Both types of forces, however, may be abused, causing much sorrow and grief. The most common need for atonement is when we accidentally hurt or damage. For this reason, the standard chatat offering is the goat, a symbol of blight and destruction.

On Yom Kippur, however, we seek forgiveness for the misuse of all forms of power. Therefore, we offer a second chatat from an ox, the classic beast of labor. With this offering, we express our regret if, inadvertently, our constructive deeds may have been inappropriate or harmful.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 198-199. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah, vol. I, p. 167)

Why are We Counting The Omer?
Rabbi Meyer Laniado
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Why are we counting the Omer? Are we counting down towards something? Think about it. What number are we starting with? Do we start with 50 or 49 and count to 1, counting down the days towards a particular date? Or, do we start with 1 and count towards 50? One should note that we are counting up, and not counting down towards a specific date. This means that our counting defines when the date will be, as opposed to the date defining how many days are left. Before discussing why we count up, let's first better understand why we count, then why we are so excited about this counting, and then finally why we count up and not down.

Rambam states that our counting is a misva deoraita: "It is a positive commandment to count seven complete weeks from the day the qorban omer is brought, as [Vayiqra 23:15] states: "And from the day after the Sabbath, you shall count... seven weeks." It is a misvah to count the days together with the weeks (Rambam Temidin Umusafin 7:22)."

Originally, during the time of the Beit Hamiqdash, we would bring a Minha, a grain offering, called the Minhat haOmer on the second day of Pesah, and then count until the 50th day, Shabuot, when we would bring another meal offering called the Shetei Halehem. This counting of days was what Rambam was referring to as misva deoraita. So, what are we so excited about? We are counting away from one qorban, the Minhat haOmer, a meal offering, to another meal offering the Shetei Halehem, the offering of two loaves. What is the meaning behind these offerings?

The meaning may be found in understanding the difference between the offerings of the Omer and the Shetei Halehem. The Omer was one of the few Minha offerings brought with barley, as barley is considered something cheap, and mostly was used for animal food*. Because of this status, we only see barley brought for the Minha offering twice. The other time is by a Sota, a woman who was accused of adultery. In contradistinction to the barley offering, we have the wheat offering of the Shetei Halehem that we bring at the end of the fiftieth day. This wheat, in addition to being sustenance for humans, is baked into lehem, leavened bread, whereas the Omer is massa, unleavened bread. This can be seen as a transformation, from barley, animal feed, to wheat, human food, from massa, bread of a slave to lehem, bread of a free man. We left Egypt physically free, but it was not until receiving the Torah that we had the opportunity to become spiritually free.

The 49 days that we count up are days of our growth, days that we develop through embodying the lessons of the Torah. We learned about the values, culture, and vision of our nation during our Pesah sederim, and now we need to put those lessons into action. When starting a diet, an exercise routine, or any new type of behavior we would like to implement, we first start with our vision. We get excited about what we seek to achieve, and then create a plan for our success. The question is, how many people leave an inspirational talk or a Weight Watchers meeting but lose motivation within a week or two? I would venture to say most. To ensure that we realize the vision we have set for ourselves during our seder, of becoming mentally free, we create a forty-nine day plan. We track our success, day by day, note and recognize that we have been on track for 1 day, for 2 days, for 3 days and so on. Each day we develop more and more, step by step, milestone after milestone.

To help us, our Hakhamim suggested that we use this time to study Pirquei Abot. Let's utilize these days for our personal growth, developing ourselves, as we count up from the minhat haomer, made of barley, animal feed, to the wheat offering; from the offering of unleavened bread to the offering of leavened bread, let us develop ourselves from our physical freedom, our Exodus from Egypt, to the key to our spiritual freedom, our receiving of the Torah.

*tBavli Pesachim 3b; Sotah 9a and 15b

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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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.

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Rabbi Wein
NAIVETE

Ignorance is curable by knowledge, naiveté much less so. The naïve person, in most cases, is well aware of the facts. Nevertheless, he or she refuses to draw the correct and logical conclusion from those facts. Fanciful, wishful thinking clouds one's rational judgment. It is as though one believes that by wishing so, it will indeed turn out to be so.

The Torah bids us to be an optimistic and hopeful people, yet it warns us not to be a naïve people. The paradox of Jewish belief is that it is utopian in nature but it is very wary about pursuing policies or revering individuals who are purely messianic and utopian in nature and conduct.

Part of its rejection of Christianity was the latter's rejection of the true nature and desires of humans in the naïve pursuit of a perfect world and a utopian future. It is to this very idea that Maimonides addresses himself by stating that the world will continue as it is even in the messianic era.

The line between optimism, the belief in a better future and naïve wishful thinking is often blurred by humans. But there is no doubt that such a demarcation line does truly exist. As dangerous to society as ignorance is, I believe that naiveté is a far more dangerous and destructive human failing. The tragedies of the twentieth century and the attendant deaths of so many tens of millions of people came not from ignorance of facts and of history but rather from beliefs in terrible utopian ideas of empire, social class, economic wealth and naively foolish biological and racial theories.

On my recent trip to the United States I was privy to a conversation between a very intelligent community-minded, fine Jewish woman who was about to embark on her first trip to Israel. She was trying to employ a tour guide who would take her to see the "settlements" in Judea and Samaria. She also wanted him to arrange a meeting with a fair-minded Arab family with whom she could discuss her ideas about a permanent peace. I flippantly interjected: "So would we in Israel!"

The problem with most of the do-gooders in the Jewish community is not that they are insincere or ignorant of the facts and issues that confront Israel, it is that they are hopelessly naïve about the Palestinian street and leadership. They have constructed an imaginary scenario in their minds and like all standard utopians, refuse to be budged from it by acts that they themselves are well aware of.

Thus many are led to believe, in their own naiveté, that the desired result is not only achievable but it is at hand if only Israel would somehow remove the "settlements." Whether actually viewing the facts on the ground will somehow sober her to the realities of our situation is questionable. Such people usually find it difficult to abandon cherished long-held beliefs and proposals. Witness those who supported the Soviet Union for over seventy years of murder and tyranny. That was the ultimate example of naïve behavior in our time.

The Oslo Agreements and the twenty year aftermath of violence and disappointment has pretty much cured most Jewish Israelis of their naiveté about the Arab world and its attitude towards the Jewish state. The original naiveté took two different and widely variant directions. One naïve belief was that there was going to be a greater Israel from the river to the sea.

Somehow the Arabs and the world were going to accept this vision and allow it to be translated into reality. The other path of wishful thinking was that the Arabs would now come to accept Israel as a legitimate country and presence in the Middle East by trading land for peace. Both of these naïve visions have proven to be unrealistic and most of the Israeli public has now accepted this reality.

The Arab world and particularly the Palestinian Authority have never been cured of their naïve vision of the fact that somehow they can make Israel disappear by terror, lawsuits, UN resolutions, stonewalling all proposals and by not fulfilling past commitments. As long as the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian street continues to fantasize that

what it wishes is what it will get, then there will be no meaningful progress towards a settlement and modus vivendi with a permanent Israeli presence in the Middle East. So we are faced with dealing with continued naiveté instead of just plain ignorance. And that is really the crux of the problem.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Judaism's Three Voices

The nineteenth chapter of Vayikra, with which our parsha begins, is one of the supreme statements of the ethics of the Torah. It's about the right, the good and the holy, and it contains some of Judaism's greatest moral commands: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," and "Let the stranger who lives among you be like your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were strangers in Egypt."

But the chapter is also surpassingly strange. It contains what looks like a random jumble of commands, many of which have nothing whatever to do with ethics and only the most tenuous connection with holiness:

Do not mate different kinds of animals.

Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed.

Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material. (19)

Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it.

Do not practise divination or sorcery.

Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. (26-28)

And so on. What have these to do with the right, the good and the holy?

To understand this we have to engage in an enormous leap of insight into the unique moral/social/spiritual vision of the Torah, so unlike anything we find elsewhere.

The West has had many attempts at defining a moral system. Some focused on rationality, others on emotions like sympathy and empathy. For some the central principle was service to the state, for others moral duty, for yet others the greatest happiness of the greatest number. These are all forms of moral simplicity.

Judaism insists on the opposite: moral complexity. The moral life isn't easy. Sometimes duties or

loyalties clash. Sometimes reason says one thing, emotion another. More fundamentally, Judaism identified three distinct moral sensibilities each of which has its own voice and vocabulary. They are [1] the ethics of the king, [2] the ethics of the priest and fundamentally, [3] the ethics of the prophet.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel talk about their distinctive sensibilities: For the teaching of the law [Torah] by the priest will not cease, nor will counsel [etzah] from the wise [chakham], nor the word [davar] from the prophets. (Jer. 18:18)

They will go searching for a vision [chazon] from the prophet, priestly instruction in the law [Torah] will cease, the counsel [etzah] of the elders will come to an end. (Ez. 7:26)

Priests think in terms of Torah. Prophets have "the word" or "a vision." Elders and the wise have "etzah". What does this mean?

Kings and their courts are associated in Judaism with wisdom – chokmah, etzah and their synonyms. Several books of Tanakh, most conspicuously Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (Mishlei and Kohelet), are books of "wisdom" of which the supreme exemplar was King Solomon. Wisdom in Judaism is the most universal form of knowledge, and the Wisdom literature is the closest the Hebrew Bible comes to the other literature of the ancient Near East, as well as the Hellenistic sages. It is practical, pragmatic, based on experience and observation; it is judicious, prudent. It is a prescription for a life that is safe and sound, without excess or extremes, but hardly dramatic or transformative. That is the voice of wisdom, the virtue of kings.

The prophetic voice is quite different, impassioned, vivid, radical in its critique of the misuse of power and the exploitative pursuit of wealth. The prophet speaks on behalf of the people, the poor, the downtrodden, the abused. He or she thinks of the moral life in terms of relationships: between God and humanity and between human beings themselves. The key terms for the prophet are tzedek (distributive justice), mishpat (retributive justice), chessed (loving kindness) and rachamim (mercy, compassion). The prophet has emotional intelligence, sympathy and empathy, and feels the plight of the lonely and oppressed. Prophecy is never abstract. It doesn't think in terms of universals. It responds to the here and now of time and place. The priest hears the word of God for all time. The prophet hears the word of God for this time.

The ethic of the priest, and of holiness generally, is

different again. The key activities of the priest are lehavdil – to discriminate, distinguish and divide – and lehorot – to instruct people in the law, both generally as teachers and in specific instances as judges. The key words of the priest are kodesh and chol (holy and secular), tamei and tahor (impure and pure).

The single most important passage in the Torah that speaks in the priestly voice is Chapter 1 of Bereishit, the narrative of creation. Here too a key verb is lehavdil, to divide, which appears five times. God divides between light and dark, the upper and lower waters, and day and night. Other key words are "bless" – God blesses the animals, humankind, and the seventh day; and "sanctify" (kadesh) – at the end of creation God sanctifies the Shabbat. Overwhelmingly elsewhere in the Torah the verb lehavdil and the root kadosh occur in a priestly context; and it is the priests who bless the people.

The task of the priest, like God at creation, is to bring order out of chaos. The priest establishes boundaries in both time and space. There are holy times and holy places, and each time and place has its own integrity, its own setting in the total scheme of things. The kohen's protest is against the blurring of boundaries so common in pagan religions – between gods and humans, between life and death, between the sexes and so on. A sin, for the kohen, is an act in the wrong place, and its punishment is exile, being cast out of your rightful place. A good society, for the kohen, is one in which everything is in its proper place, and the kohen has special sensitivity toward the stranger, the person who has no place of his or her own.

The strange collection of commands in Kedoshim thus turns out not to be strange at all. The holiness code sees love and justice as part of a total vision of an ordered universe in which each thing, person and act has their rightful place, and it is this order that is threatened when the boundary between different kinds of animals, grain, fabrics is breached; when the human body is lacerated; or when people eat blood, the sign of death, in order to feed life.

In the secular West we are familiar with the voice of wisdom. It is common ground between the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and the great sages from Aristotle to Marcus Aurelius to Montaigne. We know, too, the prophetic voice and what Einstein called its "almost fanatical love of justice." We are far less familiar with the priestly idea that just as there is a scientific order to nature, so there is a moral order, and it consists in keeping separate the things that are separate, and maintaining the boundaries that

respect the integrity of the world God created and seven times pronounced good.

The priestly voice is not marginal to Judaism. It is central, essential. It is the voice of the Torah's first chapter. It is the voice that defined the Jewish vocation as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." It dominates Vayikra, the central book of the Torah. And whereas the prophetic spirit lives on in aggadah, the priestly voice prevails in halakhah. And the very name Torah – from the verb lehorot – is a priestly word.

Perhaps the idea of ecology, one of the key discoveries of modern times, will allow us to understand better the priestly vision and its code of holiness, both of which see ethics not just as practical wisdom or prophetic justice but also as honouring the deep structure – the sacred ontology – of being. An ordered universe is a moral universe, a world at peace with its Creator and itself.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"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.

R' Miller writes in 'Praise My Soul', re 'Ata Kadosh', Kadosh means Perfect So, what am I thanking Hashem for?

3 thoughts:

1. for being able to serve You.
I am elevated by being known for serving the Greatest One. Eved Hashem.
2. You are my model to emulate. 13 Attributes/Midot.
3. I am creating my Olam Haba by thinking how Perfect/Great You are.

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