

YOUR WHOLE BEING IS HOLY

by Rabbi Label Lam

HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying, "Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and say to them, "You shall Be Holy, for Holy am I, HASHEM, your G-d."" (Vayikra 19:1)

If this statement to "be holy" is not a Commandment, then what is it? What is expected from us, "the entire assembly of the Children of Israel"? How do we go about being holy? What is the measuring stick? What are the guidelines? How do we know if we've done it or that we are doing it right? Where is the Shulchan Aruch – Code of Jewish Law on being holy? For everything else there is precision guidance. For the business of being holy we are left on our own? Why?

It's interesting that there is very little written and detailed instruction in another super important area of life. People cry out for help with desperation all the time and yet the rule book is hidden and seemingly non-existent.

When it comes to the major project of parenting the next generation of loyal Jews we basically have one line from Shlomo HaMelech, "Raise the child according to his way, and then when he grows old he will not depart from it!" (Mishlei 22:6) Again, why are there no specifics?

It depends on the particular nature of the child. What works for one may fail another. There can be a general expectation of uniform behavior and a collective approach to teaching but true educational training is individualistic. Shlomo HaMelech did not say raise children according their way, he said raise the **child** according to **his** way. The group-think model can only go so far if we expect that when that child grows old he will not depart from it!

Rabbi Kalish, the Rosh HaYeshiva from Waterbury said, "Let's say that 5 boys missed morning Davening. I can devise a way that they will be at Davening tomorrow morning, but I want them to be at Davening 40 years from now." That far-sighted dimension of wise advice, "so when he grows old he will not depart from it" compels us to design a unique strategy for each child, including ourselves.

I heard from my Rebbe that there are two ways that Jews cook -ripen -develop. The old fashioned style is the way a roast is prepared. It is covered with spices and broiled at 450 degrees for 3 hours. At one point it is toasty on the outside but it could be that when you slice it open you might discover it is frozen and raw on the inside. Not done yet!

Then there is a newer high tech approach represented by the microwave. Put in a frozen hotdog and after a few minutes there may still be ice crystals on the outside but when you bite into it you burn

your tongue. There's an invisible fire within.

The ideal education, the Chovos HaLevavos points out, is accomplished when the external training meets the fire within. So too an aspiring musician must practice scales and learn music theory. He is not a musician though until he expresses himself from the inside- out. Without the classic training he would not be able to articulate his musicality. Without inspiration his musical talents will wither.

"Be Holy" challenges us to express ourselves, our deepest selves. The Piacezno Rebbe said, "It is not sufficient to act holy but one must become holy." "Be creative and contribute to the world. Give it the best you have. Make a niche for yourself that will always be felt in the world." Playing this life with **your whole being is holy!**