

SEPARATE AND PURE

by Shlomo Katz

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring
Edited by Shlomo Katz
Contributing Editor: Daniel Dadusc

Acharei Mos - Kedoshim

Volume XIII, No. 26

8 Iyar 5759

April 24, 1999

Today's Learning:

Kil'ayim 4:1-2

Orach Chaim 90:18-20

Daf Yomi: Sukkah 23

Yerushalmi Shekalim 9

Both parashot that are read this week adjure us repeatedly to be "kadosh" - usually translated "holy." Rashi teaches that "kadosh" means "separate," i.e., it is not enough to be moral; one must take extra precautions to distance himself from immorality. [Interestingly, the dictionary definition of "holy" is "set apart."] Ramban goes even further and writes that "kedushah" means "sanctifying even that which the Torah permits." "One might have said," writes Ramban, "that since the Torah permits kosher food, I will be a glutton [and act similarly with regard to other halachically-permitted physical pleasures]; therefore the Torah says, 'Be kadosh'."

R' Gedaliah Schorr z"l adds in the name of R' Yehoshua of Kutna z"l: The Torah says (Vayikra 19:1), "You shall be kadosh, for kadosh am I, Hashem, your G-d." The midrash comments (as if quoting G-d), "This verse might suggest that you should be kadosh like Me; therefore, it is written, 'I, Hashem,

your G-d'." (In other words, you cannot be like Me.) What does this mean?

Hashem reigns over everything that exists, the pure and impure alike. One might think: "Just as He has a relationship of some kind with that which is impure or prohibited, so I will emulate Him and involve myself with that which is impure or prohibited." Therefore the Torah teaches, "I am kadosh - I can remain kadosh in the midst of impurity. As for you, practice kedushah by sanctifying that which the Torah permits" (as Ramban writes). (Ohr Gedaliahu: Kedoshim p.57)

"You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall reprove your fellow and do not bear a sin because of [literally: 'on'] him." (19:17)

Ramban explains: If someone has wronged you, do not hate him in your heart. Rather, reprove him. Ask him why he acted as he did and let him explain himself. If you do that, you will not hold his sin against him. (Commentary to Vayikra 19:17)

R' Elazar Kalir z"l (died 1801 - not to be confused with the liturgist with a similar name) writes: The hatred which results when a person has been slighted and lets his anger fester, rather than talking it over with the offender, is what is meant by "sinat chinam"/"needless hatred." Chazal teach us that this type of enmity is what destroyed the second Bet Hamikdash.

R' Kalir adds: Although the Ramban's message is valid, he cannot mean that this is the only situation in which one must reprove another. It is clear from the gemara that there is a more general mitzvah to rebuke a person who has committed any type of sin, whether a sin against man or a sin against G-d.

Chazal say that this mitzvah applies so long as one is not absolutely certain that the sinner will reject the rebuke. Even if it is likely that the rebuke will be rejected, but it is not certain, the rebuke must be given. Why?

R' Kalir explains: We read in Yechezkel (33:8), "You have not spoken to warn the rasha about his way - the rasha will die with his sin and I will seek his blood from you. And since you have warned the rasha about his way, to return from it, and he has not returned, he will die with his sin, and you have saved your soul." It is curious that regarding the person who was not rebuked, the prophet says, "the rasha will die with his sin," whereas regarding the person who was rebuked and who rejected the rebuke, the prophet says, "[H]e will die with his sin." Isn't the latter person more deserving of the appellation "rasha" than the former person?

The answer is that a person who has been rebuked, even if he rejects the rebuke, may repent on his deathbed. He will die with his sin, but he will not die a rasha. Not so the person who was never rebuked; he will have no information that will cause him to repent before his death. (Chavot Yair: Drush Ohr Hachaim, p. 1)

R' Avraham Halevi Horowitz z"l (16th century; father of the Shelah Hakadosh) writes as follows regarding the mitzvah of tochachah/reproof:

We read (Mishlei 15:31), "The ear that hears life-giving reproof will reside in the midst of the wise." King Shlomo is informing us in this verse that a person must cause his own ears to hear words of tochachah. One must rebuke himself, for who will worry for a person if not himself? (Berit Avraham 1:1)

Pirkei Avot

Rabbi Yaakov said: "One who walks on the road while reviewing a Torah lesson but interrupts his review and exclaims, 'How beautiful is this tree! How beautiful is this plowed field!' - Scripture considers him to have forfeited his life." (Chapter 3, mishnah 9)

R' Moshe Almosnino z"l (16th century) writes: When one studies Torah, he distances himself from sin and from everything bad. However, this is subject to one's Torah knowledge becoming a permanent part of his being.

What is the test of whether one has integrated his Torah knowledge into his being? In an earlier mishnah, Rabbi Chaninah ben Chachinai taught that one who is traveling alone but is idle from Torah study forfeits his life. When one is alone, that is the ideal time to meditate on one's studies. If one lets his mind be idle at such times, clearly his Torah studies are not an integral part of his being.

In our mishnah, Rabbi Yaakov refines R' Chaninah's test. Even if one does study while he travels, how deep is his concentration? If one allows his meditation to be interrupted before he has finished his studies, this is a sign that his connection to the Torah is not very deep. Such a person is said to forfeit his life because he has not integrated his Torah studies into his being and they cannot save him from sin.

R' Almosnino observes further: Rabbi Yaakov's criticism is limited to a person who exclaims, "How beautiful is this tree." This criticism is two-fold. First, it is understandable that even while a person is studying he may notice a beautiful tree and be impressed by it. However, if one interrupts his studies to exclaim that the tree is beautiful, that is a sign that his Torah studies are deficient.

Also, Rabbi Yaakov is critical of a person who is impressed by an individual tree. To reflect abstractly on the beauty of nature is an intellectual experience which is not inconsistent with devoting one's mind to Torah studies. However, to focus on the beauty of one specific tree lowers man's thoughts to a mundane level.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Yaakov says only that a person who interrupts his studies is "considered" to have forfeited his life, unlike Rabbi Chaninah who said that one who travels alone and is idle actually forfeits his life. Why? Because the latter spoke of a person who finds himself in a situation which is

ideal for Torah study, and he remains idle. In contrast, the person of whom Rabbi Yaakov speaks is not completely idle. Although interrupting one's Torah study will surely lead eventually to bad results, it is not presently as wasteful as being inactive. (Pirkei Moshe p.84)

Letters from Our Sages

All agree that a Torah sage living after the era of the Mishnah is prohibited from arguing on a halachic matter with a "Tanna," a sage of the Mishnah (unless the later sage finds support in the words of a different Tanna). Less clear, however, is the origin of this rule. Several explanations have been offered, including those of R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (reprinted in Sdei Chemed: Ma'amar Rihata De'chaklai) and R' Elchonon Wasserman z"l (in Kuntreis Divrei Soferim).

The following letter by R' Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz (the "Chazon Ish"; died 1953) presents his views on why no later sage can argue with a Tanna. This letter is printed in Igrot Chazon Ish, Vol. II, No. 24).

The truth is that the generation after the [completion of the] Mishnah saw that their own stature was lower than that of the masters of the Mishnah, and they knew for certain that truth lay in the hands of the earlier generations. Since the later generation knew that it could never penetrate to the truth of any matter if the Tannaim [plural of "Tanna"] had not already done so, the later generation was not permitted to argue with the earlier ones. Rather, the later generation would merely teach and review the words of the Tannaim who came before them. For this reason, the authors of the Gemara nullified the opinion of an Amora [sage of the Gemara] if his words showed that he was unaware of a contrary teaching of a Tanna on the same subject. Only the sage known as "Rav" - because of his unique stature - did not have his words nullified if he argued with a Tanna.

This decision was made by the sages after the Mishnah through the guiding hand of Providence and was Divinely inspired. The same process occurred at the end of the era of the Gemara.

Regarding that which the author of the Kessef Mishneh [R' Yosef Karo z"l; 1488-1575] wrote, that the sages at the beginning of a new era accepted upon themselves not to argue with the sages of the previous era, they did not do this out of the goodness of their hearts. Rather, the pursuit of truth demanded this, for how can we rely on our own judgments when we know that our intellects are limited and the truth is not available to us?!

Sponsored by The Rutstein family in memory of mother and grandmother Pesha Batya bat Zemach a"h (Bessie Rutstein)

The Vogel family in memory of mother and grandmother Bluma bat Shabtai Hakohen a"h (Blanche Vogel)

Copyright © 1998 by [Shlomo Katz](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.
