

ACHAREI MOS



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ANYONE CAN BECOME A KADOSH

THE SPECIAL MESSAGE TO ALL OF US

וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל ואמרת אלהם קדשים תהיו כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם.

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, ‘Speak to Bnei Yisroel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, Hashem your G-d, am holy.’” (Vayikra 19:1-2)

It says in the Zohar that the *parshah* of *Kedoshim* is a *klal* of the entire Torah. That means that all the *mitzvos* are included in this *parshah*. It's the seal of *emes* on the ring of Hashem. In this *parshah* the deepest secrets are revealed. All the *mitzvos* that appear in this *parshah* appear in the *aseres hadibros*. *Chazal* tell us clearly that most of the rules of the Torah are included in this *parshah*. The Zohar also says when the *chevraiayah kadishah*, the holy *chaburah* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai came together to learn this *parshah*, they were overjoyed because of the many rules and secrets that are found in this *parshah*.

Now, the question is, what is the secret? What is the general understanding of why this *parshah* is so special?

The *rosh yeshivah* of Ohr Yisrael, Rav Yaakov Neiman, zt"l, offered an understanding and an insight into this. He said that this *parshah* begins with דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל. Does anybody realize how unique this language is? Is this something that you find in many places in the Torah? No. We don't find this language of כל עדת בני ישראל anywhere in the Torah besides for one other place, and that is regarding *korban Pesach*. This tells us that just like every single person is *chayav* in *korban Pesach* - *anashim*, *nashim*, older, younger - so, too, everybody is commanded in the *mitzvah* of קדושים תהיו. Hashem wants every single Jew, through the *mitzvos* of the Torah, to be *kadosh* and strive for it.

So we have to realize that if Hashem asks every Jew to be *kadosh* that means that all of us, all Jews - even those who think they can't be *kadosh* - are all *shayach* to *kedushah*.

NO EXCEPTIONS

Now, we know in the Torah there's a great rule, and that rule is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu does not demand from people things that they're not capable of. Everybody who is asked and commanded to do a *mitzvah* has to know that he's able to withstand the challenge of this *mitzvah* and to be *mekayem* this *mitzvah*. There are some *mitzvos* that are not given to everyone. Maybe only *kohanim*, maybe *levi'im*. But with this *mitzvah* Hashem says כל עדת בני ישראל, there are no exceptions.

Now, of course there are people that are on a higher level than others. Not everybody is created equal. That's not something that Yiddishkeit subscribes to. But everybody is *shayach* to the *mitzvos* of the Torah and everybody is *shayach* to be a *kadosh*.

If you take a look in the Ohr Hachaim, he asks why does the Torah emphasize כל עדת בני ישראל by this *mitzvah*? He says: קדושים תהיו, והוציא זכרון מצוה זו בלשון זה של קדושים, לומר שכל המקיים מצוה זו נקרא קדוש, והוא מאמרם ז"ל (נוק"י פכ"ד ירושלמי יבמות פ"ב ה"ד) ג"כ. ולטעם זה דקדק לומר אל כל עדת בני ישראל, לומר כי מצוה זו ישמרה קדושים תהיו היא מצוה שישנה בכל אדם, שכל איש ישראל בקיימו מצוה זו קדוש יאמר לו, ואין הדרגה בישראל שתהיה נמנעת מהשגה זו, וכו'.

A SHABBOS KIDDUSH SCENE

Now, what is the *mitzvah* of *kedushah*? What is the essence of the *mitzvah* of *kedushah* that every one of us is *shayach*

¹ עוד ירצה על דרך אומרם ז"ל (קידושין לט.): ישב אדם ולא עבר עבירה נותנים לו שכר כעושה מצוה, והוא מאמר הכתוב קדושים תהיו במצות עשה בבה עבירה לידו שיתרחק מעשות, ובוה קיים מצות עשה שנצטוו במאמר קדושים תהיו, והוציא זכרון מצוה זו בלשון זה של קדושים, לומר שכל המקיים מצוה זו נקרא קדוש, והוא מאמרם ז"ל (נוק"י פכ"ד ירושלמי יבמות פ"ב ה"ד) ג"כ. ולטעם זה דקדק לומר אל כל עדת בני ישראל, לומר כי מצוה זו ישמרה קדושים תהיו היא מצוה שישנה בכל אדם, שכל איש ישראל בקיימו מצוה זו קדוש יאמר לו, ואין הדרגה בישראל שתהיה נמנעת מהשגה זו, וכו'.

to? The *mitzvah* of *kedushah* is the ability of a human being to exhibit self-control, to control himself in matters that seem to come naturally, in the areas that a person from his earliest childhood days was desirous of. Every child likes to eat cookies and candy - it's a common thing that children do. They eat cookies and candy and nosh.

If you ever go to a *kiddush* where there are a lot of children, you'll notice a very interesting phenomenon. The children always run first. They want to get to the *kiddush* before everybody else. And what does each child do? They take a nice plate - the biggest plate that the *kiddush* offers - and they go around and their eyes go traveling over all the platters of cakes. And they put one piece on their plate. Then they look at their friend's plate. They see their friend put two cakes. So they also put two. Three, three. It's an amazing phenomenon.

I've seen this all over the world, wherever I was present at a *kiddush*. I wanted to know if it was a *minhag America* or was it only a *minhag* in a specific place? Sadly, I saw it all over - the same *mahalach*.

Now, you think the following: "Does the kid really think that they made all those pieces of cake for one kid?" It seems like that's what they think. They pile it very high. And if you come at the end of *kiddush*, which I've also tried to do, you'll see there's a lot of leftovers anyway. But that's the nature of a person. From the youngest age he wants as much as he can get.

Have you ever seen how kids take candies at a *kiddush*? They *mamash* take handfuls, globs. Not one candy per person. They want a whole handful of candies. They put it in their pocket. They put some in their mouths.

Now, you have to know that the adults are no different than these kids, they are just smarter. They leave the candies for the kids. They go for the big stuff. For some people it's *chulent*. For others it's *kishke*. Everybody has their *lefum madreigasam*, based on their *madreigah*, that's what they go for.

LIVING WITH LESS FOR THE SAKE OF KEDUSHAH

People don't have a concept of training themselves to live with limitations. A guy walks in the street and he looks around and there are so many interesting things to see. It's unbelievable. It's amazing. There are so many things to look at. Stand back and think about how many things you see when you go in the street. Maybe if you are in the Arizona desert you don't see too many things, but in a regular street, you see people, all kinds of people, all kinds of ages. You find things in the street, you find lots of cars. You see motorcycles. You see mopeds, electric bikes, regular bicycles. You see trees, bushes, flowers, houses. A person has to tell his children the following: "We live in a world that's full of amazing things, but you have to know that Hashem doesn't want us to look at everything we see." You should take note of what things your eyes are drawn to. From when you were a little child, your eyes were drawn to things which, as a child or even as a young adult, you did not understand why you were drawn to them.

We find unbelievable opportunities to help others and to do for others, and the Torah tells us there's a *mitzvah* of *קדושים תהיו*, that every single Jew, on his level, can be a *kadosh*. Any time you stop yourself from taking that second piece of cake, or that second piece of candy or that second piece of pizza or anything extra in the world - you are really training yourself not to take extras. And then you should say, "Hashem, I'm doing it in order to exhibit and acknowledge that I want to be a *kadosh*, because You want me to be a *kadosh*." If you do that, you are accomplishing a tremendous thing! Even something that's 100% kosher. Not one *shtick isur* in it! But any time a person says, "I am going to withhold myself from drinking as much wine as I want, as much whiskey as I want," you are accomplishing a big feat. Did you ever see at a *kiddush* where a guy likes to fill up his *kos*? He's *machmir* like the Chazon Ish and he wants to have a *revi's* of whiskey. And they'll look at the bottle as if they're big experts and they pour themselves a *gantze revi's*. Is it *treif*? No. But you should know that this is not an act of *kedushah*. Now, some people don't like it. "Okay, so that's not called *kedushah*," they say. But you should know that *kedushah* is training yourself to withhold from something that you want.

Imagine a guy goes into a store and somebody gives him a credit card and says, "Buy to your heart's content." Then you walk into this restaurant and it's all paid for. I'll never forget I was once in a restaurant somewhere and I met somebody who said that he knew me. He was very happy to see me. I was very happy to meet him. He was from Hamilton, Ontario. I don't even remember his name anymore. After I finished my *seudah* in the restaurant, I was ready to pay. The lady came over to our table and said that my bill was paid for already. "Paid for? Who paid for me? I don't know anybody here. Who could have paid for me?" I asked. She said, "The man sitting at that table paid for you." I remember my first thought was, "Had I known this, *eilu yadati*...that it was free I would have eaten more." Then I remember thinking to myself, "*Oy gevalt*. You *sus* that you are! Are you hungry? You didn't have enough to eat?" No. But I could have *chapped arein* more.

That's what the Ramban says is called a נבל ברשות התורה - becoming a sordid person within the permissible realm of the Torah (Vayikra 19:2).²

It refers to somebody who says, "If I could *chap arein*, let me *chap arein* as much as I can. If I can have more fun, more joy, another cup of wine, why not *chap arein*?"

That's the *minhag* of people. But the Torah says: קדושים תהיו. There is a story about Rav Chaim Soloveitchik's *rebbe*. He was called Rav Dovid Blinder, Rav Dovid the blind one. That's what they called him. Why was Rav Dovid called the blind one? He wasn't blind. But he was *mekabal a kabalah chazakah* to never look beyond his four *amos*. You know what kind of self-control that takes? *Pashut* people called him the "blind one" because of this! He "made" himself blind. That's a tremendous thing!

A STRANGE GUEST IN CHOFETZ CHAIM'S HOUSE

The Chafetz Chaim once had a guest for Sukkos and the Chafetz Chaim really enjoyed this guest. He was a *yarei shamayim*, a very *chashuve* Yid, and the Chafetz Chaim enjoyed talking with this man for an unusually long time. The Chafetz Chaim's son, Reb Leib, was in the house and was put off by this man because the man was, like the kids nowadays say, "weird." What was weird about him? Some days he would do non-stop talking from the morning to the night. And some days all he did was shake his head and didn't say a word.

So one day, the Chafetz Chaim's son said to his father, "Tatty, *a mudene mentsch*." A weird guy. What's with this dude? The Chafetz Chaim told him, "Oh, no, no. *Nein, nein*." He said, "*Mein kind*, he's a big *tzaddik*. He's working on himself." His son asked what he meant.

So the Chofetz Chaim gave his son the following *mashal*. He said, "There was a guy with a garden, and he planted vegetables there. His family used to live off the vegetables. One day the guy came down and he saw that the animals ate up his vegetables. He got all worked up and he decided to put up a fence. He put up a metal fence around his garden and he left the door open. He figured that his problem was now solved. He came back a little while later and all his vegetables were eaten up again. It was very disappointing."

I happen to know about this. I've done that also. I stopped planting vegetables many, many years ago because I used to plant them and the deer would come and enjoy them. The Chofetz Chaim continued, "The guy put up an iron fence and the animals still came in. He was wondering, 'How did they get in?' Then he noticed that some of his kids, when they went through the door, left it open. So he decided that he had an *eitzah*. 'I'm going to build a fence around the whole garden. There's no way in and no way out. The only way to get in is to climb over the fence and drop into the garden.' And that's what he did."

The Chofetz Chaim concluded and said to his son, "This Yid is a big *tzaddik* and he's working on himself. He saw it was very hard to keep his fence (i.e. his mouth) closed and protect himself from *lashon hara*. So what did he do? He decided that he's going to make *ta'anis dibur*. To make a *ta'anis dibur* every day is very hard, so he decided that one day he's going to talk and the next day he's going to be silent. Then the next day he's going to talk and the next day after that he's going to be silent. That's how he changed over, every other day. He said he's working on himself. You have to respect this man very much. He's a very special person. That's called a *kadosh*."

"SELECTIVE" HEARING

The Steipler was a *heilegeh mentsch*. He probably saw and heard all kinds of *narishkeit* from people so he used to say that he was deaf. "*Ich her nisht*" (I cannot hear). It was amazing. For most people who came in he'd say, "*Vus vus?*" You had to give him a paper. But for those people who were his *mentschen* - he was able to hear them. I personally saw him learn *bechavrusa*. I remember thinking to myself, "I saw him learning. How are they learning? It must be a strange *chavrusa shaft*. How do you learn with a deaf person? Do you write down the Torah? What do you do?" So I came up a little closer. I saw they were learning *mesechta Shavuos*. They were sitting together and learning *Tosfos*. The Steipler had his finger on

² קדושים תהיו הוּו פרושים מן העריות ומן העבירה שכל מקום שאתה מוצא גדר ערוה אתה מוצא קדושה לשון רש"י (רש"י על ויקרא י"ט ב'): אבל בתורת כהנים (פרשה א ב) ראיתי סתם פרושים תהיו וכן שנו שם (שמיני פרק יב ג) והתקדשתם והייתם קדושים כי קדוש אני כשם שאני קדוש כך אתם תהיו קדושים כשם שאני פרוש כך אתם תהיו פרושים ולפי דעתי אין הפרישות הזו לפרוש מן העריות כדברי הרב אבל הפרישות היא המוזכרת בכל מקום בתלמוד שבעליה נקראים פרושים והענין כי התורה הוזהרה בעריות ובמאכלים האסורים והתירה הביאה איש באשתו ואכילת הבשר והיין אי"כ ימצא בעל התאווה מקום להיות שטוף בזמת אשתו או נשיו הרבות ולהיות סובאי יין בווללי בשר למו וידבר כרצונו בכל הנבלות שלא הוזכר איסור זה בתורה והנה יהיה נבל ברשות התורה לפיכך בא הכתוב אחרי שפרט האיסורים שאסר אותם לגמרי וצוה בדבר כללי שנהיה פרושים מן המותרות ימנע במשגל כענין שאמרו (ברכות כב) שלא יהיו תלמידי חכמים מצויין אצל נשותיהן כתרנגולין ולא ישמש אלא כפי הצריך בקיום המצוה ממנו ויקדש עצמו מן היין במיעוטו כמו שקרא הכתוב (במדבר ו ה) הנזיר קדוש ויזכור הרעות יהונכרת ממנו בתורה (בראשית ט כא) בנח ובלוט, וכו'

the place and he was saying it. I walked over. I said to myself, “This man can hear?! He doesn’t have a problem hearing?! They told me before that he was deaf and you had to write things down for him!”

So I leaned over and said to the Steipler, “*Shteit in sefer Kehilas Yaakov in Bava Kama, a rayah from Teshuvos HaRosh.*” I said, “*Lechorah the rayah from the Teshuvos HaRosh is tzarich biur.* I don’t understand the *rayah*. *Lechorah* איך הדון דומה לראיה - the two things you compared, are not *domeh* (aren’t similar).” The Steipler had these big and thick eyebrows. He lifted up his eyes, looked at me and said, “*Zen gerecht* - the next time I print it, it won’t be there.” I didn’t have to raise my voice to talk to him. I didn’t have to shout. I didn’t have to write anything down. I asked around later and they told me, “When he wants to hear, he can hear.” Rabbosai, that was definitely a קדושים תהיו. There was no question about it. It was a *ma’aseh* of קדושים תהיו. And whenever he wanted he would just say, “*Ich her nisht.*” So the guy would write things down on a piece of paper.

HIGHER THAN MALACHIM

A *mentsch* has to know that it’s *shayach* for every person, כל עדת בני ישראל, to observe the Torah, to see what Hashem wants us to do, wants us to keep, and wants us to observe. And if you do that, you know what happens? You’re a *heilege mentsch*. The Vilna Gaon says that for every second that a person closes his mouth he is *zocheh* to such *ohr*, such light from Hashem, that no *malach* and no creature that Hashem created could comprehend it! That means, when someone *consciously* closes his mouth. It doesn’t mean when you’re sleeping. But if you consciously close your mouth when you’re around people, and you could talk, but you consciously say, “I’m not going to talk,” that’s called a *ma’aseh* of greatness. That’s called being *kofeh* (subduing) yourself, being *kofeh* your *yetzer hara*.

TA’ANIS HARA’AVAD

There’s a famous Ra’avad. The Ra’avad was a very famous *av beis din*, a very famous *tzaddik niflah*, from the times of the *rishonim*, and he wrote a *sefer* about *kedushah*. He gives an amazing suggestion. After talking at length about how people have to learn to control themselves, he suggests what has become known as the *ta’anis haRa’avad*. I wish all *taneisim* were like that. But the Ra’avad came and taught us about a special *ta’anis*. He said the *ta’anis* is as follows. You eat the whole day. You don’t skip any meals. Now that’s a great *ta’anis*. What you eat, he says, should be good tasting and it should be satisfying. In other words, don’t eat dust. Don’t eat tasteless foods. To settle a person’s mind, a person has to have good food. It has to give him a *shtickel* joy and a sense of satisfaction. If you take away the joy of eating from a person, he won’t be settled.

This is a tremendous insight. When a person eats and he feels joy it’s a tremendous thing. My zeida (Rav Avigdor Miller, ז”ל) would eat cereal and milk in the morning. As he ate his cereal, you could think he was eating lamb chops, the best ones. Or cowboy steaks. He chewed on those grains with such pleasure, with such a *geshmak*. That’s how he ate. He was very appreciative to Hashem for that. Now that’s greatness!

So the Ra’avad says if a person wants to do a *ta’anis* he should leave over some food on his plate when he could still eat more. He’s not starving anymore, he says, but he could still eat more.

When I first saw this Ra’avad, I thought this is the easiest *ta’anis*. I couldn’t imagine anything easier than that. I remember reading it again. Maybe I missed something? It doesn’t say to cut out certain foods. It doesn’t say that. You know what it says? Leave a bit of food on your plate.

Now, if you try it, you’re going to be shocked. I’ve tried this many times. The first thing the *yetzer hara* comes and tells you is, “Come on. It’s *ba’al tashchis*.” Answer: it’s not *ba’al tashchis* because anything you do in order to grow and to elevate yourself is not *ba’al tashchis*. That’s the greatest use of this object, so it’s the farthest thing from *ba’al tashchis*!

REACHING KEDUSHAH WITH PIZZA CRUST

Second of all, it’s an amazing *yetzer hara* when you’re chewing on a piece of good food. Let’s say a guy eats pizza. So it’s not so hard to do the *ta’anis haRa’avad* on pizza. Why? Because a lot of people, when they get down to the crust, they leave the crust anyway. They’re not “crust” people. But once in a blue moon, you are a “crust” kind of guy, and if the crust is well made and it has a crunch to it, you think, “Wow, a good ending! I never had a problem leaving over the crust.” So I said to myself, “Let’s start by eating from the crust.” Now the best piece is the corner piece, the tip. That’s where the *schmaltz* is. Right in the center, where you get that cheese. That’s what you want. There were times I could just take a little piece from

the tip and give the rest to my kids. That's how it is. To leave that over is not *pashut*.

And it's amazing the struggle that you have, even with cereal. If you're eating a good cereal, a good bowl of cereal, try to leave over a bit. Now, some people don't like milk. I see some *bachurim* take cereal. They fill it with milk to the top and when I come back the thing is still filled with milk and all they ate was cereal. They don't like milk. I was *dan* them *lekaf zechus* they were doing the *ta'anis HaRa'avad*. I don't think so. That's called *ba'al tashchis*.

Try to leave something over. You have a piece of cake - leave over a piece. That is tremendous. The Ra'avad says that will teach yourself self-control and you will become a person who rules over himself and fulfills the *mitzvah* of קדושים תהיו.

“KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE”

This is a tremendous insight, a tremendous phenomenon. So start practicing this. Take some time, a few seconds out of your day and think about this. I'll give you an example. Here's a person who's sitting and learning. Certain people, especially people that are outgoing people or extroverts, naturally notice every single thing in the room. Introverted people naturally notice only whatever is directly in front of them. Extroverts see everything. They have to pull themselves away from the room and get themselves into the book. Try putting your eyes in the *sefer* and say, “I'm not going to pick my eyes up when I'm learning for the next five minutes” Try it. I initially found it to be Gehinom. When you're learning, you talk in learning. That's automatic. People look around. You look out the windows. You look around the place. What is this guy doing? What is he not doing? Who is here? Who is not here? It's a *metzius*.

A person can become someone who brings a lot of *nachas* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu by just doing these simple acts of *kedushah*, and these simple acts of *kedushah* will elevate you and קדש יאמר לו (Yeshaya 4:3).³ In *shamayim* they will pronounce you to be a *kadosh*. As the Ohr

Hachaim says, “There's no level of a person in Klal Yisrael that's not *shayach* to this concept.”

Let us be *matzliach* and touch upon this subject and reach tremendous heights!

✧ THE BOTTOM LINE ✧

If Hashem commanded us to keep the *mitzvah* of קדושים תהיו, it means that each one of us is capable of fulfilling it on our own individual level. Since this *mitzvah* involves the ability to practice self-control in the permitted matters of our lives, this means that every time we can withhold ourselves from enjoying an extra piece of cake or a scoop of delicious cholent at a kiddush, or hold ourselves back from unnecessary speech, we are training ourselves in the area of *kedusha*. Through this we can reach levels that even *malachim* cannot comprehend! This coming week, I will think about this concept for a few minutes, and when I am eating my daily meals, I will try to leave a small piece of food on my plate, quietly and without any fanfare. In the *zechus* of thinking about these ideals and beginning to slowly implement some of them, I will begin to elevate myself to become more *kaddosh*, in order to fulfill the *mitzva* of קדושים תהיו!

³ והנה הנשאר בציון והנותר בירושלם קדוש יאמר לו כל הקתוב לחיים בירושלם

