

ISSUE #128

ח' אייר תשפ"ו
25/4/26



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת אחרי - קדושים

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. דַּבֵּר אֶל כָּל עֵדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ, כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.
(ויקרא יט, א-ב)

Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisroel and say to them; You shall be holy, for I am holy, Hashem, your G-d. (Vayikra 19:1-2)

In this week's *Sidrah*, the Torah calls on Klal Yisroel to act with sanctity and explains how a Yid can live with true holiness.

The Ramban explains that the directive to "be holy" encompasses the intent of the Torah regarding many of its commandments. Holiness is not confined to the observance of any specific categories of *mitzvos*; rather, it urges moderation in all areas of life, especially regarding what is permitted. After the Torah lists various forbidden marriages and unacceptable foods in Acharei Mos, an individual might mistakenly conclude that simply avoiding these prohibitions is sufficient.

The Torah, therefore, demands that we "be holy." Hashem expects more from a Yid than mere obedience to the letter of the law. The rules concerning marriage and dietary restrictions serve as a means to an end, guiding us toward a life dedicated to studying the Torah, performing *mitzvos*, and fulfilling Hashem's will. The command of *תְּהִיוּ קְדוֹשִׁים* encapsulates the goal of observing the *mitzvos*: to educate us in the manner that will support a genuinely Torah-based existence.

Thus, moderation and abstaining, even from permissible pleasures, are essential. Without the imperative to achieve sanctity, a person might become, as the Ramban put it, *נָבֵל בְּרִשׁוֹת הַתּוֹרָה*, *a degenerate with the permission of the Torah* – operating within the bounds of *halachah* while neglecting its spirit by surrendering to self-indulgence, gluttony, and licentiousness. Every Yid is expected to live a holy life by limiting the pursuit of permitted pleasures. We must recognise our elevated mission in life, considering not only whether something is halachically permitted, but also whether it reflects the sanctified status of being part of Hashem's holy people.

R' Leib *zatzal* explains that this insight clarifies why the Meforshim who tally the *mitzvos* do not include the commandment of *תְּהִיוּ קְדוֹשִׁים*. This directive does not provide a specific instruction; rather, it serves as the purpose for the various prohibitions concerning food and marriage. It reveals that the ultimate function of all these prohibitions is to help the individual elevate themselves and lead a life devoted to fulfilling Hashem's true will.

R' Yerucham Levovitz *zatzal* provides an analogy to illustrate this idea. Often, we see that simple peasants and farmers are conscripted into the army and undergo five years of necessary military training and drills. They are trained to be athletic, alert, and active in preparation for the challenges of battle. Surprisingly, when they complete their military service and return to civilian life, they show no sign of having changed; they are just as clumsy and lethargic as they were before. What is the reason for this?

R' Yerucham explains that the answer is simple: these individuals never intended to transform or improve themselves. The years spent in training were undertaken solely because they were compelled to do so, viewing it as an annoying obligation to fulfil. Naturally, once they were released, they returned to their old habits since no genuine transformation had taken place. Similarly, someone who indulges in worldly pleasures, even while adhering to the Torah's laws, will remain as unrefined as before since he has no desire to better himself. Only by recognising the purpose of a Torah life can its observance truly bring about personal change.

There is a famous quote from R' Yisroel Salanter *zatzal*, that states that after one has learned the entire Torah and reaches the words **לְעִינֵי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל**, another phrase must be added: “Don't be a fool!” R' Leib explains that, in this context, it means we should not be foolish and fail to appreciate the meaning of the *mitzvos*. The Torah is not merely giving us technical commands; rather, it encourages us to use its fulfilment to improve ourselves and to achieve the spirit of Hashem's will.

This lesson can also explain the Mishnah (Pirkei Avos 6:6) which states, **גְּדוּלַת תּוֹרָה יוֹתֵר מִן הַכְּהֻנָּה וּמִן הַמְּלָכוֹת, שֶׁהַמְּלָכוֹת נִקְנִית בְּשָׁלֹשִׁים מַעֲלוֹת, וְהַכְּהֻנָּה בְּעֶשְׂרִים וָאַרְבַּע, וְהַתּוֹרָה נִקְנִית בְּאַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁמֹנֶה דְּבָרִים. וְהַמְּלָכוֹת נִקְנִית בְּאַרְבָּעִים וְשָׁמֹנֶה דְּבָרִים. וְהַתּוֹרָה נִקְנִית בְּאַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁמֹנֶה דְּבָרִים. וְהַמְּלָכוֹת נִקְנִית בְּאַרְבָּעִים וְשָׁמֹנֶה דְּבָרִים. וְהַתּוֹרָה נִקְנִית בְּאַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁמֹנֶה דְּבָרִים.** *Torah is greater than the Kehunah and the monarchy, for the monarchy is acquired with thirty attributes, and the Kehunah with twenty-four, but the Torah is acquired with forty-eight things, which are, study, listening carefully etc..*

At first glance, the comparison made in this Mishnah may be challenging to understand. The 30 attributes of a king refer to the various rights and privileges that distinguish him from commoners and emphasise his elevated status. For example, a king is not subject to judgment, he takes the first portion of war spoils, and he has the authority to create a path through others' property. Furthermore, the 24 attributes related to the Kehunah refer to the 24 gifts bestowed upon the Kohanim by the Torah, such as *terumah* and portions of *the korbanos*.

In contrast, the 48 aspects associated with Torah are the 48 methods through which one can acquire Torah knowledge. This raises an important question: How do the gifts of the Kehunah and the privileges of monarchy compare to the 48 pathways through which Torah can be obtained?

R' Leib offers a novel interpretation, suggesting that these 48 qualities are not merely methods for acquiring Torah; rather, they are gifts granted to those who possess the Torah. A person studying Torah should strive to improve themselves by embodying the qualities mentioned in the Mishnah. By doing so, they become deserving of the benefits that accompany Torah study: the strengthening of these attributes within them. Thus, the superiority of Torah is highlighted by the fact that a person studying it receives 48 attributes - more than what is awarded to those blessed with kingship or Kehunah.

We learn from this famous Ramban that fulfilling the spirit of the Torah is essential. We must recognise that the observance of the *mitzvos* is intended to elevate a person; therefore, mere technical adherence to *halachah* is not enough. By striving for a sanctified life - one that embodies the ideals of the Torah - we can become elevated and blessed with all the goodness it offers.

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר מאורי שערים and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to parshasheet@gvalumni.org.