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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON **KEDOSHIM** - 5771

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Tonight (Fri. night) is the 11th day of the Omer which is 1 week and 4 days.

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**www.ou.org Rabbi Weinreb's Torah Column, Parshas Kedoshim**

**Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb It's All Commentary**

I am proud of my large library of Jewish books.

My collection, which my wife half-jokingly refers to as my addiction, began on my 11th birthday with a gift from my maternal grandparents, may they rest in peace. They bought me the then recently published Shulzinger edition of the Five Books of Moses surrounded by numerous traditional commentaries. Those volumes became the cornerstone of my personal library of many hundreds of Judaic works on the Bible, the Talmud, philosophy, history, and codes of law.

These books line the walls of my private study from floor to ceiling.

Over the years, I have had many visitors who were struck by the overwhelming number of books and who reacted with awe and curiosity. Some, particularly non-Jews, would ask, "Have you read all of these?" When I confessed that I hadn't read more than very few of them, they often proceeded with yet another question:

"What are they all about? Why are so many books necessary just to explain one religion?"

They could not fathom why so much commentary was written on just a few basic biblical texts.

Often, as I responded to their inquiries, I found myself resorting to an old story of one of our greatest sages, Hillel. To most of you, this story

is probably well-known, perhaps even trite. But for many of my visitors, the story was novel, instructive, and almost revelatory.

In this story, Hillel, known for his scholarship and commitment to Torah study but particularly famous for his patience, is provocatively challenged by a heathen who demands to be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel accepts the challenge and says, "What is hateful to you do not do unto others. That is the entire Torah, the rest is but commentary. Now go out and study the commentary."

I would then explain to my inquisitive visitors that Hillel's remark was based upon a verse in this week's Torah portion, Kedoshim. There, in Leviticus 19:18, we read, "...and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Now, I would continue, loving one's neighbor as oneself is no easy task. We are likely to have numerous and diverse neighbors in the course of a lifetime, and myriad circumstances arise which pose great barriers to our love for them. And so, Jewish scholars throughout the ages have recorded their advice, suggestions, and guidelines for just how to love one's neighbor in every conceivable context and condition. That's what all these books are about, and that's why we need so many of them.

Note that Hillel himself does not choose to use the Torah's original phrase to explain the essence of Judaism to the heathen. He does not say, "Love your neighbor." Rather, he says, "Do not harm your neighbor." Perhaps this is because, as the medieval commentator Ramban suggests, loving one's neighbor as oneself is an exaggerated expectation, just too tall an order, and the most Hillel could do was to urge the heathen to do no harm.

Whether one uses the biblical formulation commanding us to love our neighbor, or chooses Hillel's version which asks us to refrain from harming him or her in a way in which we ourselves would not want to be harmed, the essence of our Torah is this ethical imperative. And the many hundreds of volumes in my personal library, and the hundreds of thousands of similar tomes written throughout the centuries, can all be understood as the constant and perpetual struggle of our sages to develop a "database" sufficient to enable us to realize this ethical imperative.

One such commentary deserves mention, particularly in our age and culture, which has been diagnosed as narcissistic, as overly self-loving.

This commentary takes the form of a story about a disciple of Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk who eavesdropped upon his master as the latter was reviewing this week's Torah portion aloud. Rabbi Mendel read, "...and thou shalt love thy neighbor... as yourself???" Yes, as yourself!!!" First as a question, and then as a forceful declaration.

The disciple was puzzled by the manner in which his master read the passage. He asked the master's chief disciple, Reb Hershel, for an explanation. This was his answer:

"The master first asked a question. Can it be that we are asked to love our neighbor as ourselves? Are we to understand that it is permissible to love oneself? Is it not a basic teaching here in Kotzk that one dare not love oneself, lest he thereby become blind to his own faults?" In our terminology, Rabbi Mendel could not accept the slightest suggestion that narcissism was acceptable.

"Then the master realized a deeper meaning of the verse. Namely, we ought to love our neighbor to the same extent that we are critical of ourselves. The mitzvah is that we put in as much effort loving our neighbor as the effort that we should be investing in our own personal spiritual and moral perfection."

In an age of "me first", it is even more important that we direct our love outwards towards the other, and not inward toward ourselves. We must, at all costs, avoid self-adulation and self-worship.

That is just one small sample of the vast treasure of commentary that is in our Jewish library. No wonder that our sages refer to the "ocean of the Talmud", and to our Torah as deeper than the sea.

To read more articles and essays by Rabbi Weinreb, visit his blog at [www.ou.org/rabbi\\_weinreb](http://www.ou.org/rabbi_weinreb).

<http://www.aish.com/jl/h/48959246.html>

### **Crash Course in Jewish History The Holocaust by Rabbi Ken Spiro**

While Nazi Germany proceeded to systematically round up and execute Jews, the rest of the world closed its eyes and its doors.

As we begin to discuss this most painful of subjects to the Jewish people, please keep in mind that this is a vast subject. At the moment there are some 1,200 books in print examining why it happened, how it happened, and all the details in between.

Some of the classics that give insight into the Holocaust are: (i) The Holocaust by Martin Gilbert M; (ii) The War Against the Jews by Lucy S. Dawidowicz; (iii) Night by the Nobel Prize Winner Elie Wiesel; (iv) The Diary of A Young Girl by Anne Frank; (v) Hitler's Willing Executioners by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen; (vi) Destruction of European Jews by Raul Hilberg  
Alternatively one can visit: Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem, Israel; The Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. ; The Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles

On the web, try: [www.aish.com/holocaust/default.asp](http://www.aish.com/holocaust/default.asp)

A Crash Course in Jewish History cannot possibly do justice to this devastating event in which a nation (Nazi Germany) targeted a people (the Jews) and systematically and with breath-taking cruelty killed 6 million of them. The word "genocide" was coined to describe it. This word did not exist in the English language before this.[1]

Not only did Nazi Germany set out to eliminate the Jews from the face of the earth, virtually no other country on earth lifted a finger to stop them.

Of course, there were isolated incidents of great heroism on the part of some non-Jews, but history stands in mute testimony that this was a paltry effort. Most did nothing as the Jews died.

The Holocaust thrusts a question into the face of all of humanity: how could civilized people let this happen?

We have a clue to where the answer to this question lies from Adolf Hitler himself:

"Yes, we are barbarians! We want to be barbarians! It is an honorable title ... Providence has ordained that I should be the greatest liberator of humanity. I am freeing men from ... the dirty and degrading self-mortifications of a false vision (a Jewish invention) called 'conscience' and 'morality.'" (See Hermann Rauschning's books: Hitler Speaks and Voice of Destruction.)

#### **ADOLF HITLER**

To begin with we have to explode some major myths about Hitler.

Adolf Hitler, who was born in Braunau, Austria in 1889, had nothing but positive interactions with Jews in his childhood and youth, contrary to popular belief that tries to blame his actions on some early vendetta. In his youth, when he was a struggling artist, many of the people who supported him were Jews. Even more, some important figures in his life were Jewish -- like his family doctor or his commander in World War I who nominated him for the Iron Cross.

And yet, despite these positive experiences, Hitler had a deep-seated hatred of the Jews. In terms of Jewish history, the only people who had similar pathological hatred, were the nation of Amalek.

(Amalek, as we might recall from Part 16, was the ultimate enemy of the Jewish people in history. Amalek's major ambition was to rid the world of the Jews and their moral influence and return the planet to idolatry, paganism, and barbarism.)

Hitler's hatred of the Jews -- like the Amalekite's hatred of the Jews -- was not illogical. We can even call it rational, in that he had a reason for it that he understood very well, as we shall see.

Hitler also was not insane. He had his neuroses, but he was not crazy. In fact, he was a brilliant political manipulator. We can certainly say a lot of horrible things about him, but Hitler was one of the greatest public speakers in human history. If you understood German, you'd understand while watching tapes of his speeches why those blonde, blue-eyed Germans cheered so heartily a man whose very appearance contradicted everything he preached. There he was with black hair and brown eyes, as far away as he could come in appearance from the Aryans, the master race with which he wanted to populate the earth. And yet they gave him their loyalty and gave up their lives for him.

Hitler's rise to power began after the 1932 German elections when his party received more than 35 percent of the vote. A year later President Paul von Hindenburg appointed him as Chancellor of Germany. Immediately after he came to power, he set up Dachau -- not as a concentration camp for Jews, that

would come later, but as a place to put his political opponents. Little by little, he took a very sophisticated democratic system of the Weimar German Republic and turned it into a totalitarian state. Democratic rights were suspended, political opposition was suppressed and books were burned. [2]

His dictatorship in place, Hitler embarked on a policy of bullying his way into taking over much of Europe.

Initially Europe, and certainly the United States, did nothing. Together with his Austrian Fascist allies, Hitler (in violation of the Treaty of Versailles) [3] pressured Austria into unifying with Germany in March 1938. Then he took over part of Czechoslovakia, a region called the Sudetenland, without the consent of the Czechs but with the blessing of European powers - particularly England and France. The Prime Minister of England at that time, Neville Chamberlain, showed how little England cared about the problems of Europe in this speech:

"How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks here because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing."

England and France negotiated a pact with Hitler in Munich on September 30, 1938, promising to look the other way as Hitler dismembered Czechoslovakia. Afterwards Chamberlain, satisfied Europe would be safe from Hitler, declared:

"...the settlement of the Czechoslovakian problem, which has now been achieved is, in my view, only the prelude to a larger settlement in which all Europe may find peace. This morning I had another talk with the German Chancellor, Herr Hitler, and here is the paper which bears his name upon it as well as mine.... I believe it is peace in our time ... peace with honor."

A year after this infamous statement, World War II broke out -- a war in which 50 million people would die -- showing how naive is a leader who thinks that by placating evil peace can be won.

#### **OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE JEWS**

Some three years before he made his strides into Europe, Hitler was already putting into place his program to get rid of the Jews.

It began in 1935 with the Nuremberg Laws. These laws basically cancelled all the rights that Jews had won in Germany post-Enlightenment.

For so many years before the Enlightenment Jews were hated because they were different and refused to assimilate. Post-Enlightenment, (as we saw in Parts 53 and 54) in the very country where the Jews assimilated the most easily, they were now hated because they were blending in too well. Hitler's ultimate nightmare was that Jews would intermarry with Germans and poison the gene-pool of the master race. [4]

Hence laws such as these were passed to preserve "the purity of German blood":

"Marriages between Jews and subjects of German or kindred blood are forbidden."

"Extramarital relationships between Jews and subjects of German or kindred blood are forbidden."

"A Reich citizen can only be a state member who is a German of German blood and who shows through his conduct and is both desirous and fit to serve in the faith of the German people and Reich. The Reich citizen is the only holder of political rights."

"A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He can not exercise the right to vote. He cannot occupy public office."

"Jews are forbidden to display the Reich's national flag or to show the national colors."

Systematically, Jews lost their citizenship, their political rights, their economic rights.

Then the violence started.

#### **CLOSED DOORS**

The first explosion of major Nazi violence against the Jews was Kristallnacht -- "the night of broken glass." It happened on November 9, 1938. That night 191 synagogues were destroyed and 91 Jews were killed, many beaten to death.

Afterwards some 30,000 Jews were arrested and fined a billion marks (equal to about 400 million dollars) for the damage that was caused by the Germans.

This was really the writing on the wall for the Jews. At this time many tried to get out of Germany. Unfortunately, very few places in the world would accept them. For example, when the Foreign Minister of Canada was asked how many Jews Canada should take, his response was "None is too many."

America took in only 200,000 Jews due to the anti-Semitism that we discussed in Part 59.

Even when it was clear the Germans were persecuting the Jews, the American State Department had such strict criteria for allowing Jews into the country that 75% of the spaces that were allotted to Jews technically, by American law, were never even taken. Amazingly, so many Jews who in theory could go to America couldn't make the requirements. (Canada was by far worst of all the Western countries allowing only 5,000 Jewish refugees into the country.)

All told, about 800,000 Jews actually found refuge in various places in the world. But the majority couldn't get out.

(For more on this subject read *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* by Arthur D. Morse. It is a stinging indictment.)

#### WORLD WAR II

World War II started on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland.

That brought England and France into the war in opposition to Germany. On June 22, 1940, France surrendered to Germany, leaving England to fight it alone. Eventually the U.S. would join in, although not until 1941, when Japan bombed, which was Germany's ally, bombed the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor.

By that time, virtually all of Europe was in Hitler's control. It happened quickly because the Germans were so good at waging war (and because countries like France, while well equipped-had military leadership who lacked the will to fight). They had perfected the art of using concentrated, fast-moving armor and infantry together with intense artillery and air support - they called it blitzkrieg, meaning "lightning war." They were unstoppable.

They were stopped, of course -- first and foremost by the Russians and secondly by the British and Americans -- though it took years at a cost of many lives.

In the beginning of the conflict, Hitler had signed a non-aggression pact with Stalin but in June 1941, he violated it and invaded the Soviet Union anyway. Here, too, the Germans were initially very successful, primarily because Stalin, despite all the evidence, refused to believe that Hitler would break his non-aggression pact and attack Russia. Stalin had also purged his whole army of most of his competent officers -- he had killed them all.

Basically as fast as the Germans could walk is as fast as they advanced into the Soviet Union. And there, of course, was where a great many Jews resided. Immediately, Hitler began his campaign to eliminate them.

The Einsatzgruppen, special German units, began systematically executing people and some 1.5 million Jews were killed by them alone. They were rounded up, usually over a big ravine or pit which they were often forced to dig themselves, and then they were machine-gunned over it. Those who did not die immediately from their gunshot wounds were buried alive.

This is what happened at the Babi Yar forest near Kiev in the Ukraine. There, according to German "official" records 33,782 men, women and children were executed over a ravine in September of 1941. The watchman at the old Jewish cemetery, near Babi Yar, recalled how the Ukrainian policeman:

...formed a corridor and drove the panic-stricken people towards the huge glade, where sticks, swearing, and dogs, who were tearing people's bodies, forced the people to undress, to form columns in hundreds, and then to go in the columns in twos towards the mouth of the ravine.

At the mouth of the ravine the, the watchman recalled:

...they found themselves on the narrow ground above the precipice, twenty to twenty-five meters in height, and on the opposite side there were the Germans' machine guns. The killed, wounded, and half-alive people fell down and were smashed there. Then the next hundred were brought and everything repeated again. The policemen took the children by the legs and threw them alive down into the Yar.

But the worst was yet to come.

[1]Raphael Lemkin (June 24, 1900 - August 28, 1959) was a lawyer of Polish-Jewish descent....He is best known for his work against genocide, a word he coined in 1943 from the root words *genos* (Greek for family, tribe or race) and *-cide* (Latin for killing). He first used the word in print in *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation - Analysis of Government - Proposals for Redress* (1944). From Wikipedia. [2] It is interesting to note a comment from the great German-Jewish writer Heinrich Heine. After watching a book burning in Germany in 1920 he stated: "Where they burn books, they will also, in the end, burn human beings." Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All-A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch 1743-1933*. (Picador, 2002), p 119. [3] The Treaty of Versailles (1919) was a peace treaty that officially ended World War I between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany. [4] It is interesting to note that throughout history Gentiles were happy to have Jews leave the fold of Judaism, convert to Christianity and marry out of the faith. During the vast majority of Jewish history in Europe Jews stubbornly clung to their identity and usually refused to convert to Christianity even under duress. It is only when we get to 19th and 20th centuries do we find significant numbers of Jews abandoning their faith and consciously attempting to assimilate. Precisely at this point in history the reason for anti-Semitism takes a dramatic course change: In medieval Europe the Jews was hated for being different. Now the Jew is hated for trying to be the same as the Gentile. While neither of these two reasons is the true cause of anti-Semitism, assimilation is never the solution. Perhaps the most ironic aspect of anti-Semitism is that the greatest explosions of anti-Semitism have usually taken

place in places where Jews are most comfortable amongst the Gentiles. Germany is arguably the best example of this phenomena. For more on this topic see: Dennis Prager & Joseph Telushkin, *Why the Jews-The Reason for Anti-Semitism*, New York: Touchstone Books. 2003.

Author Biography: Rabbi Ken Spiro is originally from New Rochelle, NY. He graduated from Vassar College with a BA in Russian Language and Literature and did graduate studies at the Pushkin Institute in Moscow. He has Rabbinical ordination from Yeshiva Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem and a Masters Degree in History from The Vermont College of Norwich University. Rabbi Spiro is also a licensed tour guide by the Israel Ministry of Tourism. He has appeared on numerous radio and television programs such as B.B.C. Radio and TV., The National Geographic Channel, The History Channel and Arutz Sheva-Israel National Radio. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife and five children where he works as a senior lecturer and researcher on Aish HaTorah outreach programs.

ORDER KEN SPIRO'S BOOK "WORLDPERFECT: THE JEWISH IMPACT ON CIVILIZATION" What it would take to constitute a perfect world? Ken Spiro questioned more than 1,500 people of various backgrounds, revealing six core elements: respect for human life; peace and harmony; justice and equality; education; family; and, social responsibility. A highly readable and well-documented book about the origins of values and virtues in Western civilization as influenced by the Greeks, Romans, Christians, Muslims and, most significantly, the Jews. "This is a book that everyone in the world should read" Kirk Douglas-Actor and author

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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein  
<info@jewishdestiny.com>

Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Jerusalem Post :: Friday, April 29, 2011

#### HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The advent of Yom HaShoah this coming week always engenders within me an inner turbulence and discomfort. It is not only the fact that the Holocaust destroyed six million innocent people simply because they were Jews -- a third of our nation and co-religionists -- though that alone causes me to have this great angst in my soul. Human beings are somehow built to withstand tragedy -- even enormous indescribable tragedy - and continue with life. Rather, part of my discomfort is that I, and I think the Jewish people generally, have not found a truly meaningful way of commemorating this historic tragedy.

All of the Holocaust museums world wide and especially Yad Vashem here in Jerusalem are magnificent in their historic presentation of the awful facts of the Holocaust. But one never leaves the museums with a sense of comfort or even consolation let alone closure.

There is no museum that can speak to the soul of the Jew. It speaks to our senses, even to our intellect, to our hearts, but somehow never to our soul. And it is that emptiness deep within our soul that gnaws at us and leaves us unfulfilled no matter how magnificent the museum or meaningful the memorial ceremony may be.

There are numerous groups within the Jewish society that somehow do not participate in Holocaust memorial days or events. There are many reasons advanced for this seemingly insensitive behavior, none of which are satisfactory to my mind or soul. Yet I feel deep down in my being that the spiritual and soulful emptiness that somehow always accompanies these commemorations reflects the absence of so many Jews.

I say this not in criticism of any of the commemorations. They have an impossible task and therefore one should almost expect them to fall short of the mark. But the intellectual acceptance of this fact still does little to quiet the turmoil in my soul.

I have always identified myself and our post-Holocaust generations with the great imagery of the scene described by the prophet Yechezkel. The prophet views a large valley covered by bleached scattered human bones. The Midrash teaches us that these were the remains of the tens of thousands of the tribe of Joseph who attempted to escape Egyptian bondage before the actual redemption from Egypt by Moses took place. They had fallen victim to the ravages of the desert and the enmity of the pagan tribes that persecuted them. The prophet sees no hope for their revival. After all, by his time they have already been dead for millennia. And the prophet also senses that they have never properly been mourned and commemorated.

The Lord informs the prophet that these bones are symbolic of "the entire household of Israel." The household of Israel is itself overwhelmed with its anonymous dead who have no graves or monuments to somehow mark the fact that they once lived on this earth. The prophet despairs of their revival or continuity.

But the Lord tells him to prophesy over the dry bones and restore them to their physical human form. Then the spirit of the Lord enters them and they come back life and arise on the valley floor as a mighty host. The prophet does not tell us what the end of this story was. What happened to this mighty host of newly and miraculously revived Jews? The Talmud offers two different insights on this matter. One is that the revival was only a temporary phenomenon and that they all reverted immediately to being dry dead bones.

This opinion was contradicted by the sage Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira. He rose in the study hall and stated: "God forbid that we should advance such a pessimistic opinion. Rather, they married, raised children and lived a full life thereafter. And I am a descendant of theirs and as a proof of the matter I hold in my hand the tefilin of my ancestors [that they themselves wore.]"

I feel that the only closure that can reach our soul regarding Jewish tragedy is the recognition of the continuity of generations and tradition that binds the Jewish people together. Our past, those that are gone and even those who are unknown to us whose ashes and bones litter the landscape of a cursed continent, live on through us - through our achievements and struggles on behalf of Torah and Israel.

We wear their tefilin, many of us literally, all of us figuratively. This realization regarding the tefilin will always speak to our souls and help us to truly commemorate the Holocaust and the resilience of the Jewish people in overcoming a tragedy of even such incalculable dimensions. Shabat shalom.

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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein  
<info@jewishdestiny.com>  
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

### **Weekly Parsha :: KEDOSHIM :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

The Torah's definition of holiness and sanctity, of dignity of self and others, of respect to one's body and that of others, is in the ability to channel and control one's physical desires. The Torah explicitly does not condone celibacy nor does it demand from human beings any degree of self-mortification or masochism. It does most certainly demand from us responsible and balanced human behavior.

It outlines a necessary and omnipresent nuance in our lives - in our mental and physical behavior. The rabbis have taught us that humans willingly sin only because a manner of distorted thinking - a type of insanity if you will - enters one's mind and being.

Judaism has always fought the lonely and mainly unpopular battle against sexual immorality and flagrantly wanton behavior. From the Canaanites through the Greeks and the Romans, the debauchery of much of the Medieval Age and the current unchecked and unrestrained

attitudes of modern society, traditional Judaism has decried lewdness and wanton self-gratification in sexual matters.

It has demanded that people be kdoshim - separated from immoral behavior and forbidden liaisons. It demands self-control, the avoidance of compromising and dangerous situations and a realization that ultimate good sense should triumph over momentary gratification. Judaism imposes on us an unpopular stance, especially so in our current modern society. And yet over the long history of human society, it has proven to be the only correct guide for a healthy, happy family life and a more harmonious social compact between people.

Many people, Jews included, mock the protective measures enjoined by Jewish tradition to insure a society that aspires to be one of kdoshim. The mingling of the sexes in synagogue worship in the non-Orthodox world has not brought any great degree of comfort to those people who sit together. It has rather led to a drastic decline in synagogue attendance and participation in those groups.

The whole concept of modesty in dress, speech and behavior is unfortunately completely absent and alien in most of modern society. Not a day passes when we are not made aware of the presence of sexual misconduct among those that seemingly should know better.

Judaism preaches defensive behavior and the avoidance of situations that could lead to problematic circumstances. Such defensive measures are mocked and scorned by the progressive wise of the current world. Yet we are witness to the tragic personal and national consequences that results in life when such defensive measures are absent or ignored.

Mental health experts have told me that pornography, especially on the internet, is the newest serious addiction in our schools, making drugs old hat and no longer cool. Protected by the noble ideal of free speech, it ravages our society and creates a dangerously dysfunctional generation and society.

The entertainment industry in all of its facets has been polluted beyond recognition by its pandering to the basest animalistic desires of humans. Nevertheless, the Torah does not waver in its demand to us to be kdoshim, to swim against the tide and persevere in our age-long quest to be a holy and dedicated people.

Shabat shalom.

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From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>  
To weekly@ohr.edu  
Subject Torah Weekly

**TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Kedoshim**  
**For the week ending 30 April 2011 / 25 Nisan 5771**  
**from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu**  
**by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com**  
**OVERVIEW**

The nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive commandments are taught:

Prohibitions: Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit; theft and robbery; denial of theft; false oaths; retention of someone's property; delaying payment to an employee; hating or cursing a fellow Jew (especially one's parents); gossip; placing physical and spiritual stumbling blocks; perversion of justice; inaction when others are in danger; embarrassing; revenge; bearing a grudge; cross-breeding; wearing a garment of wool and linen; harvesting a tree during its first three years; gluttony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; tattooing.

Positive: Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree's 4<sup>th</sup> year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf.

**INSIGHTS**

## Rain On My Parade

*"You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge..." (19:18)*

You wake up with a smile on your face. It's good to be alive. Another day. Another gift. As you leave your house you bump into your neighbor. "Good morning, Fred!" you beam at him. "What's good about it?" comes the dour reply. He gets into his car and drives off. You try out your smile again, but find that there's a little dent in it that wasn't there before.

You arrive at the office and manage to crowd into the elevator. It's a long haul to the eighteenth floor. Around the eleventh floor the elevator grinds to a halt. No amount of button pushing will encourage it to move one inch more. The doors open. Everyone grimaces at the thought of another eight big marble floors to climb, weighed down by the latest power briefcase and a sub-portable laptop that starts to eat into your shoulder after five minutes. You announce to the assembled throng, "Well, at least we won't need to go to the gym today!" If looks could kill, you have just been punctured by more arrows than General Custer at Little Big Horn.

The Torah prohibits a person from taking revenge. If you ask your neighbor to lend you his lawnmower and he refuses, then the next week when he comes and asks if he can borrow your power drill you're not allowed to refuse him because he refused you. That's called taking revenge. Not only this, but you're not even allowed to say to him, "Of course, you can borrow my power drill. I'm not like you. I lend my things." The Torah categorically calls this bearing a grudge.

All well and good that I'm not allowed to take revenge by refusing to lend my power drill, but shouldn't the Torah also prohibit my 'friend' from refusing to lend me his lawnmower? After all, he started things, didn't he?

Someone who refuses to lend his possessions unreasonably has already proved himself to be terminally mean. The Torah isn't addressing him; he's already beyond admonition. What does concern the Torah, however, is that his meanness should not become infectious, that his bad character should not sour your generosity.

When your neighbor returns your friendly greeting with a look that could freeze a fire, don't let him control your life. You go on and smile and smile. Don't let other people's behavior dictate who you are.

Chizkuni as heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>

To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>

Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

### Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

#### Parshas Kedoshim

**You shall be holy... every man: your father and your mother shall you revere. (19:2,3)**

Parashas Kedoshim, the parsha that exhorts the Jewish People to be holy, contains within it the majority of the Torah's essential laws. This parsha is all about kedushah, holiness. It is, therefore, surprising that the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem, which is primarily kedushah-oriented - V'nikdashti b'soch Bnei Yisrael, "I shall be sanctified among Bnei Yisrael" (Ibid 22:32), is not mentioned until the next parsha. Why? Sanctifying Hashem's Name is the ultimate mitzvah that a Jew can fulfill. Thus, it should be included - and, for that matter, given primary placement - in Parashas Kedoshim.

Horav Moshe Tzvi Nariyah, zl, offers two possible approaches to help us to understand this omission. First, we may have it all wrong. The essence of kedushah is not about giving up one's life. Hashem wants us to live. Therefore, the symbol of kedushah, the expression of essential Judaism is not specifically through the vehicle of Kiddush Hashem, but rather through kiddush ha'chaim. Hashem wants us to sanctify our lives, to live Jewishly, despite the challenges which may surface from time to time. The mitzvah of V'nikdashti, the command to sanctify our lives, to be willing to martyr one's life in affirmation of religious

belief, should be the crowning achievement, summarizing a lifelong commitment to kedushah. It certainly should not be the starting point of kedushah. A person becomes kadosh after having fulfilled the mitzvos in Parashas Kedoshim. He can then go to Parashas Emor and confront the V'nikdashti. Horav Levi Yitzchak, zl, m'Berdichev, once commented, "The gentiles also know to fast, but to eat in accordance with halachah, Jewish law, only a Jew knows." Abstinence is something that a Christian can relate to, but to sanctify life, to "live" b'kedushah, only a Torah Jew can do.

Second, only he who sanctifies his life through the performance of Torah and mitzvos has a mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem. Bnei Noach do not have the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem. They have their seven mitzvos - and that is it. Nothing more is demanded of them. Only those who live a life of holiness are worthy of dying holy. In other words, the V'nikdashti of Parashas Emor is the consequence of Kedoshim teheyu.

The concept of kiddush ha'chaim took on new meaning during the tragic years of the Holocaust. Rav Nechamiah Alter, zl, brother of the Gerrer Rebbe, spoke at a meeting of rabbanim in Lodz. He stressed that, while the imperative of Kiddush Hashem takes on various forms, most central to the mitzvah is maintaining our dignity before the gentiles. Kiddush ha'chaim demands that a Jew face death and live his life in dignity, cognizant of the Divine component inherent in man.

Throughout the war, acts of dignity that truly indicated that the Jew was made of other "stuff" were plentiful. Specifically, during times such as these the Divine component within the Jew becomes aroused, surging forward in ways that the natural mind cannot fathom.

It occurred in Lublin in 1939, when the German commander gathered together the Jews in an empty field at the outskirts of town and, in jest, ordered the Jews to sing a chassidic melody. Slowly, and with great hesitation, one of the men began the traditional melody, Lomir iberbetten, Avinu She'baShomayim, "Let us be reconciled, our Father, in Heaven."

The song, however, did not have its desired effect. The Nazi wanted enthusiasm. He was not getting it. He felt that he would get the desired effect if he would "encourage" the Jews "somewhat." He ordered his hooligans to attack the Jews, because they had refused to comply with his orders. During this insane outburst against the Jews, an anonymous voice pierced through the turmoil with a loud cry, Mir vellen zei iberleben, Avinu She'baShomayim, "We will outlive them. Our Father in Heaven!" Instantly, the song took hold among the entire group, as they all began to sing with fervor and passion. Their excitement became frenzied, and they broke into a stormy and feverish dance. The entire group, swept up with the enchanting melody, had now become infused with a new emotion, renewed faith and trust in the Almighty.

This was kiddush ha'chaim, exalting in life, sanctifying one's life for Hashem, demonstrating to the Nazi beast that our love for - and devotion to - Hashem transcends anything they can do to us. They can take our bodies, but they cannot touch our souls. Horav Menachem Ziemba, zl, summed up the concept of kiddush ha'chaim with a zealous plea for resistance prior to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in April 1943: "By the authority of the Torah of Yisrael, I insist that there is absolutely no purpose nor any value of Kiddush Hashem inherent in the death of a Jew. Kiddush Hashem in our present situation is embodied in the will of a Jew to live. This struggle for hope and yearning for life is a mitzvah, (to be realized by means of) nekamah, vengeance, mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice/extra dedication, and the sanctification of the mind and will."

**You shall be holy... Every man: your father and mother shall you revere... Do not turn to idols... I am Hashem, your G-d. (19:2,3,4)**

Parashas Kedoshim begins with Hashem's exhortation that we become holy. Apparently, it is not sufficient for a Jew to be good, moral, or ethical. He must aspire for more. He must strive to be holy. It is interesting to note that the first pesukim of the parsha all end: Ani Hashem Elokeichem, "I am Hashem, your G-d." The Chidushei HaRim, zl, establishes a connection between these pesukim and derives an important lesson therein. He divides the Jewish community into three parts. First, is the Jew who suffices with "do not turn to idols." This is the extent of his commitment. He does not observe; he certainly is not concerned with holiness. He does understand, however, that an increased relationship with the non-Jewish world - entertaining their culture, assimilating with them - is tantamount to turning toward their gods. He draws the line at assimilation. The second category is the mitzvah-Jew, who observes the Torah, keeps its mitzvos. He understands that it is not enough simply to refrain from interacting socially with the gentile world; one must be proactive by observing Torah and mitzvos. The third type is one who understands that Judaism demands more than mitzvah observance. It demands sanctity. A Jew is a different breed, and his Torah is unlike any other religious dogma. Observance and commitment are simply not enough. One must devote all of himself to Hashem. One must strive to become holy, because that is the salient characteristic of Hashem.

Thus, the Torah closes each pasuk with Ani Hashem Elokeichem, for Hashem is G-d to each of these Jews. While the non-practicing Jew has a distance to traverse to achieve a religious comfort-zone, he at least knows what is considered bottoming out. Assimilation is a scourge from which few return. The Jew who has assimilated has not only severed his own connection, he has destroyed the immediate hopes of future generations to return. Yes, some do return, but only after they have discovered that they are missing something in their lives. Once they have been divorced from Hashem and His people, return is much more complicated.

What does Kedoshim tehiyu really mean? We find in other places, such as with regard to the mitzvah of Tzitzis, the Torah writes: Viheyisem Kedoshim leiElokeichem, "And you shall be holy to your G-d" (Bamidbar 15:40); or, as we find toward the conclusion of this parsha, V'hiskadasstem, vi'heyisem Kedoshim, ki Ani Hashem Elokecha, "And you shall sanctify yourselves, and you will be holy, for I am Hashem, your G-d" (Vayikra 20:7). In both of these citations, the Torah does not issue a command/exhortation to become holy; rather, it sounds more like a rite of passage - if you do the following, you will become sanctified. Here, Hashem tells us: "You shall be holy" - no, ifs ands or buts. Why? Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, cites a Midrash that says: "You (Hashem) have elevated Klal Yisrael. You have given Kehunah, the Priesthood, to Aharon forever; You have given malchus, monarchy, to David forever; You have given kedushah, holiness, to Klal Yisrael forever; as it says Kedoshim tehiyu, "You shall be holy." Thus, Rav Sholom, suggests that "You shall be holy" is not only a command; it contains a promise. Hashem assures us that we will always remain holy. This is an eternal gift from the Almighty, not to be rescinded. It is unequivocal, not based on pre-condition. It is similar to kehunah and malchus; it is inherent and forever. This is what makes us different: kedushas Yisrael. We are endowed with the G-dly gift of holiness.

Horav Elya Lopian, zl, was Mashgiach in Kelm. The yeshiva was suffering pressing financial hardships. It had reached the point that the students were starving. They had no bread, the one staple that sustained many a yeshiva student in those days of poverty and hunger. Finally, the Rosh Yeshiva dispatched his son and Rav Elya to go from house to house begging for money with which to sustain the students.

While they were on the way, they heard cries of, "Help! Help!" They saw five hundred Jews who were enclosed behind a barbed wire fence, begging for alms. They immediately forsook their original goal of raising money for the yeshiva; instead, they focused on helping these helpless Jews. A few days later, they saw a woman, herself poverty-stricken, taking her small piece of bread, which she obtained through begging, breaking it in half and giving the other half to the starving Jews.

From where does one derive such incredible strength of character, to take the last morsel of bread which she finally had been able to obtain, and share it with others - even less fortunate? How does one take the charity which is supposed to sustain her and split it in half to give another Jew? It is all the result of the promise that we will remain holy. It is not the good, moral or ethical Jew that does this; it is the one who is inherently holy Kedushas Yisrael is what inspired the Jews who were rounded up in the Nazi cattle cars to cry out to the individuals remaining in town, "I forgot to feed the chickens before I left. Please feed them for me!" A Jew is unlike any other of Hashem's creations. His intrinsic kedushah separates him from the rest. I know this may sound elitist, but it goes with the territory. While we might be the only ones thinking of the chickens in our own time of personal need, we are also the ones in the cattle cars. Being holy has its demands.

When we think about it, kedushah, like Kehunah and malchus, is a two-sided coin. Hashem made a commitment to Aharon that He would never take the Kehunah from his descendants. Inherent in this commitment is a reciprocal responsibility on Aharon's part that his descendants never fall from their exalted status. The Kehunah is theirs for the taking, but they must be worthy of it. Likewise, concerning the status of kedushah, we have Hashem's assurance that He will never take it away from us, but concomitantly we have a corresponding responsibility to maintain our end of the deal, to retain, under all circumstances, our commitment to holiness.

Every Monday and Thursday, we recite the longer version of Tachanun. At the end is a prayer, which, according to tradition, is attributed to Chizkiyahu HaMelech, who composed it as Yerushalayim was under siege by Sancheiriv. The situation looked bleak and hopeless. The king went to the Bais Hamikdash and poured out his heart in a moving plea. Its parlance is poignant and captivating. It is a rendition that expresses our reciprocity and covenantal bond with the Almighty: Habeit miShomayim u're'i, "Gaze down from Heaven and perceive that we have become an object of scorn and derision among the nations; we are considered like sheep led to the slaughter, to be killed, destroyed, beaten and humiliated." U'chol zos Shimcha lo shochachnu, "But despite all this, we

have not forgotten Your Name, we beg You not to forget us." These words tell it all. We have an enduring relationship with Hashem. Regardless of how far we have distanced ourselves from Him - He always takes us back. Likewise, the suffering and pain, death and destruction that we have endured notwithstanding, we have still continued to remember His Name We will never forget the Almighty; we are His holy ones.

The Talmud Torah of Kelm was the paragon of shleimus, perfection, in avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty. Its students were young men whose entire existence was devoted to others and to Hashem. It was never about "them"; it was always about the "other one." If there was ever a place that focused on kedushah, it was Kelm. In the last days before World War II, the Talmud Torah was under the direction of Horav Daniel Movshovitz, zl, and Horav Gershon Miadnik, zl, both sons-in-law of Horav Nochum Zev Braude, zl, son and successor to the Alter, zl, of Kelm.

Everyone knew that the Germans were on the way. They were marching forward, weaving a path of utter destruction in their wake. Kelm was next. On June 21, 1941, the Germans entered Kelm. The Shabbos before, Rav Daniel had dreamt that a tremendous destruction would befall the Jewish People, and Kelm would not be spared. He was told that the Jews of Kelm should accept the Heavenly judgment upon themselves. Rav Daniel called together the students of the Talmud Torah and related to them his dream, allowing them to let its message sink in. Not one of the families left Kelm. They were going to confront the Nazis with the resolve that characterized Kelm. Rav Daniel always spoke the truth. This was his message. They understood what was demanded of them. Rav Gershon, who was away at the time, rushed back to be with his students at this time of supreme exaltation.

Prior to being taken to the pits at the outskirts of town where they would be shot, the Jews of Kelm gathered around Rav Daniel, as he calmly gave his last shmuess, ethical discourse: "We should accept Hashem's judgment and prepare ourselves to sanctify His great Name." The men began to sing, at first quietly and then the pitch reached a fervor which bespoke their sense of calm and devotion to - and acceptance of - Hashem's decree.

VTaheir libeinu l'avdecha b'emes, ashreinu mah tovchelkeinu, "and purify our hearts to serve You in truth; fortunate are we, how good is our portion," they all sang in unison. The procession moved slowly, decorously to the pits, where Rav Daniel asked the Nazi commander permission to speak to his congregation. He curtly allowed him to speak - if he kept it short. Rav Daniel reiterated what he had said earlier in the yeshiva, enjoining the community to accept Hashem's decree wholeheartedly. It was their chance to make the ultimate sacrifice, thereby sanctifying Hashem's Name. The Nazi screamed that he was in a rush and to hurry his speech. Rav Daniel turned to the families, and, with all the dignity of his regal-bearing said to them, "The time has come. Do not fear; do not panic. It is the time for Kiddush Hashem." He said these words slowly, carefully and calmly as he stared into the faces of his community. He then turned to the Nazi monster, and, with total equanimity, said, "I have finished; now you may begin." With those last words, the Talmud Torah of Kelm, together with the members of its Jewish community, ascended to Heaven. The Kedoshim, holy ones, were returning Home.

#### **You shall love your fellow as yourself. (19:18)**

Rashi quotes Rabbi Akiva who said that the mitzvah, V'ahavta l'reiacha kamocho, is the fundamental rule of the Torah. Clearly, this mitzvah has varied applications. The Talmud Shabbos 31a relates that a gentile came before Shammai and said, "Convert me to Judaism on condition that you will teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot." Upon hearing these words, Shammai pushed the person away with a stick that was used as a measuring rod for building and architecture. Undeterred, the gentile came before Hillel and presented him with the same request. Hillel converted him. Prior to the conversion, Hillel had told him, D'alach snei l'chavrach lo taavid, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. This, in a few words, is the entire Torah, all the rest is but an elaboration of this one, central point. Now, go and learn it." The Maharsha explains the divergent approaches of Shammai and Hillel. The gentile wanted to know if, in fact, the Torah could be made to "stand on one foot." This means: Is there one major principle, one foundation, upon which the entire corpus of Torah law was based? Shammai replied in the negative, using a ruler that is the measuring tool of architects and builders. He was implying by this gesture that just as a building needs a solid foundation which is broad-based and well-laid out, so, too, the Torah cannot be reduced to one single principle. To sum up the Torah with its multifaceted and diverse precepts and codes to one simple principle is impossible.

Hillel's synopsis of the Torah was accurate, especially concerning the mitzvos that address man's relationship with his fellow man. Concerning the mitzvos that govern man's relationship with Hashem, Rashi suggests that Hashem is sometimes called Reia, fellow of man. Thus, his dictum exhorts us to follow

every mitzvah, because, otherwise, he is disregarding Hashem's wishes, and one should not do to others that which is hateful to himself.

Having explained the statements, we turn now to the "why." What motivated Hillel and Shammai to disagree concerning what seems to be a fundamental issue? Why does Hillel focus on the negative connotation of "love your fellow as yourself"? What about the other mitzvos, like listening to Hashem? Are they to be ignored? Surely, Judaism is about more than not doing to others what we do not want done to us. Horav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, zl, feels that some background must be acknowledged before we can have a better understanding of the differences between Shammai and Hillel.

Greek culture had begun to inundate the world. Thus, we must take into consideration the mindset of the gentile during that period. Jews were Hellenizing themselves, assimilating with the Greeks, living their culture, assuming their lifestyle. It was all about beauty, art and their application into all areas of life. It was about everything but spirituality. In contrast, many intelligent Greeks and Romans viewed idol-worship as utter nonsense. They appreciated the focus on the spiritual, the pure, the holy, the ethical, the compassion that were uniquely associated with the Jewish religion. So, why did they not come in droves to be converted? Apparently, they had heard from their co-religionists and even from some unknowledgeable Jews that Judaism was all about "no." It was a religion of negativity, filled with stringencies, allowing no room for flexibility and compromise. Our mitzvos wrenched Judaism's adherents from the world, from the richness and beauty of life, from its fun and entertainment.

Therefore, the average Greek viewed Judaism from afar. Perhaps, he would yearn for it, but he was not prepared to give up the beauty and culture of the Greeks for a puritan life that was devoid of enjoyment, fun and beauty. Along came this gentile candidate for conversion to ask Shammai to convert him while he was standing on one foot. He was implying that he wanted to plant one foot in Judaism, while retaining the other foot in Greek culture. He wanted to attend the bais hamedrash and the theatre, the sanctuary of the shul and the revelry of the coffee house. He wanted to have his cake with frosting and eat it, too. Shammai was a demanding person. He was a straight individual who saw black and white and had no tolerance for shades of gray. He despised anything that lacked complete integrity. It was either one hundred percent true or it was one hundred percent false. There was no room for negotiation. He viewed the edifice of Jewish life and religion as no different from an architect's plan of a building. Everything has to be perfectly aligned, unbroken and undeviating from the original blueprint. Flexibility and cutting corners do not create the path to erect a building that will endure. The slightest deviation can take down a structure. Thus, Shammai feared to accept the candidate for conversion. The man could not just accept part of Judaism. It was either all or nothing. True, he would spend time in the sanctuaries of the shul and bais hamedrash, but the inspiration would quickly dissipate when he squandered himself in the places of entertainment and beauty which he refused to negate from his life. He, therefore, took an architect's measuring rod to imply that Judaism was like a building. There was no room for digression and inconsistency. It was either all or none.

As an aside, I think that Shammai might have been troubled by the man's desire to convert while standing on one leg. He was not prepared to move forward, to be a holech. Jewish law is called halachah, derived from holech, to walk, move, proceed and progress. To remain status quo is tantamount to death. A Jew must always move forward following halachah, as it moves with him from place to place, situation to situation.

Hillel maintained a different approach to Judaism. While he agreed that one must maintain perfect integrity when building a physical edifice, the world of the spirit has different standards, hence, greater flexibility. He believed in Judaism's captivating spiritual beauty, thus feeling that a person who comes in contact with its verities would be moved, his life illuminated, his heart inspired to seek more. One thing would lead to another until indeed; he would become totally suffused in Judaism.

Hillel therefore, asked the candidate for only one thing: first, just distance yourself from doing anything negative to your fellow. Once this standard has become entrenched, you will go on to the positive aspect of the mitzvah: love your friend. With time, you will seek more, do more, understand more - and the cycle will continue. As you do more, you will seek even more until the point that you realize that one must embrace the entire Torah to be an active Jew.

"Love your fellow as yourself" is a wonderful ideal, but how does one convert this concept into reality? How do we make this a standard for living, a staple of life? Hillel gave us the recipe for success: Begin by not doing anything hateful to your fellow. The love will follow. If we were to be able to ask someone to toil in the field of parnassah, earning a livelihood, so that he could support his friend's children; and that he should do this as if it was being done for his own children: that might be asking too much. People are just not ready to make the same effort for yemem, the other fellow - regardless of how close he may be - as they would

for themselves. One can readily accept, however, not to poke fun or persecute his friend's children. Hillel says - "Ok - start by not poking fun. The love will soon become a reality." We need a starting point. Hillel gives it to us. Sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Kenny Fixler in memory of his father

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Subject Rabbi Frand on Parsha

### **Rabbi Yissocher Frand Parshas Kedoshim**

#### **Not Every Thing is Spelled Out in Shulchan Aruch**

There is a disagreement between Rashi and the Ramban in terms of the definition of the mitzvah at the beginning of Parshas Kedoshim:

"Kedoshim Teeheyu" [You shall be holy] [Vayikra 19:2]. Rashi interprets the mitzvah as "separate yourself from illicit sexual relationships and sin".

The Ramban gives the mitzvah a much broader implication. The Ramban says that in Parshas Shmini, the Torah forbade consumption of a number of species of animals, fish, and birds. In Parshas Achrei Mos, the Torah prohibited a number of specific sexual relations. However, even after all these prohibitions, a man may eat many types of meat and may engage in marital relations with women to whom he is married. The Ramban says that theoretically, until this point, the Torah did not restrict an individual from being a gluttonous and lustful person, so long as he limited his consumption to kosher wine and meat and he limited his marital relations to his wives, when they were not in a state of impurity. However, says the Ramban, to ensure that a person not become a "naval birshus haTorah" [a glutton within the areas permitted by Torah law], the Torah here gives an additional mitzvah to be holy and conduct oneself in moderation, even in those areas that are legally permitted.

The Ramban explains that this is a style that is common in the Torah. First, the Torah gives a specific list of what is permitted and what is prohibited. Then the Torah gives an "umbrella mitzvah" so that one will understand the spirit of the law and not conclude, "If the Torah has not prohibited it, it must be permitted." "Kedoshim Teeheyu" is such an umbrella mitzvah.

The Ramban cites as another example of such an umbrella mitzvah the mitzvah to "v'asisa hayashar v'ha'tov" [do what is correct and good] [Devorim 6:18]. The Torah has already singled out prohibitions for stealing, for cheating, for taking revenge, for bearing a grudge, etc. But where in the Torah does it say one must be polite or courteous? The Ramban says that the Torah cannot legislate for every single situation that might arise in society. Obviously, we would not expect the Torah to tell us that one should not talk loudly on his cell phone in an area where he is disturbing other people. One cannot do so and pretend that he is fully in compliant with a "Torah way of life" merely by protesting "where does it say that this is forbidden?" The Torah says, "Do what is correct and good". This means, "be a mensch" which means, among other things, do not talk on a cell phone at the top of your lungs in a small room.

In Parshas Reeh, concerning the prohibition of eating blood (which appears many times in the Torah), the Torah teaches "Thou shall not eat it so that it may be good for you and your children after you f or you shall do that which is correct (yashar) in the Eyes of Hashem. "

[Devorim 12:25] Thus, not eating blood is also within the domain of "you shall do that which is yashar and good". We might ask, what does not eating blood have to do with "v'asisa hayashar v'ha'tov"?

Rav Simcha Zissel proves from the Ramban that the reason for the prohibition of eating blood is that "the blood is the soul" [Devorim 12:23]. Animals have a form of a "nefesh". This level of "soul" within animals is what breeds loyalty amongst animals to their owners. (e.g. -

"man's best friend!) Plants do not do that. This is because animals have "nefesh" and plants do not. The Ramban says that it is necessary to respect this fact and it is not right for one soul - nefesh (i.e. -- man) to eat another soul - nefesh (i.e. — the blood of animals). The Ramban uses this idea to explain the mitzvah of covering the blood of a slaughtered animal (kisui hadam). The Ramban calls this a form of burial for the soul of the animal.

Rav Simcha Zissel says that this is why the Torah mentions the concept of "doing that which is correct and good" in connection with the prohibition against eating blood. This is the same idea. Hashem wants us to look at the Torah's laws and to understand the deeper message of the Torah's concern. When the Torah says, "Do not eat the blood," it is telling us to respect life – even animal life!

When we try to understand the deeper meaning of the Torah's laws, this itself is doing that which is proper and good. This probing for the deeper meaning of the Torah's commands is part of a Jew's responsibility. A Jew cannot merely ask "Where does it say it?" A Jew must read between the lines of Torah, so to speak, and conduct himself based on the spirit of the law, in addition to the letter of the law.

### **Tochacha: The Hardest Mitzvah to Properly Fulfill**

The Torah states "You shall surely chastise your fellow man." [Vayikra 19:17] There is a positive Biblical mitzvah to rebuke one's fellow Jew and set him on the correct path if one sees him doing something wrong. The Kesav Sofer in his responsa [#57] writes that this is the most difficult mitzvah to fulfill properly. The person delivering the rebuke must use all of his intelligence to measure what to say carefully and to consider the possibility that saying nothing at all may be the most appropriate thing to do.

I would venture to say that 99 times out of 100, it is better not to say anything in these situations. I am not speaking about a parent to his child or a Rabbi to his congregation, but it is usually better not to say anything to one's fellow man. The Chazon Ish makes this point in Hilchos Shechitah. One has to weigh his words so carefully if he wants them to be effective that most people are simply not capable of giving appropriate "tochacha".

The Chofetz Chaim was once traveling and he came into a Jewish inn. He sat down and saw another person enter the inn. The person was apparently an extremely boorish individual. He sat at a table and shouted at the innkeeper to bring him some food. He asked for fried goose and vodka. When the food was brought to him, he gobbled it down without making any blessings and was totally abusive to everyone around him – a truly disgusting individual. The Chofetz Chaim was about to go over to him and tell him that such behavior was inappropriate and unacceptable. The innkeeper saw that the Chofetz Chaim was about to approach the man and quickly went to the Chofetz Chaim and said, "I must tell you something about this person."

In the time of the czars, the Russians drafted Jews into the czarist army. They actually took young boys and drafted them into Czar Nicholas's army. When they took these children, it was not for 2 or 3 years – it was for 35 years. It was a living hell. The innkeeper explained to the Chofetz Chaim that this individual was grabbed away from the Jewish community at age 7 and was forced to remain in the czar's army in Siberia and elsewhere for 35 years. He does not know the shape of the letter Aleph. He has no manners because he never had any type of Jewish upbringing. He has no Torah learning because he never had the opportunity. He is, in fact, a person without any spiritual characteristics other than the fact that he still remembers that he is a Jew.

The Chofetz Chaim went over to the individual and told him "I am jealous of your portion in the world to come. For you to remain a Jew after all you experienced and not to convert to Christianity is amazing. Your 'test' (nisayon) was greater than that of Chananya, Mishael, and Azarya." [Daniel Chapter 3] The man started crying. From that day on,

he became very attached to the Chofetz Chaim and became a complete Baal Teshuva.

The pasuk says, "Do not chastise a scoffer lest he hate you; chastise a wise man and he will love you." [Mishlei 9:8]. The Shaloh HaKodesh interprets this pasuk to be teaching a quite different message: "Do not appeal to the scoffer in every person lest he hate you, but rather appeal to the wise man in every person so that he might love you."

Every person has some redeeming value, no matter how degenerate or spiritually low he has sunk. If, when addressing the person, you zero in on the person's faults and negative traits, you will not have success in correcting the person's ways. The result will be that the person will hate the one who chastised him. However, if you zero in on the person's value and positive characteristics and see the "wise man" in him, then you will connect with that person and will eventually be beloved by him.

This is exactly what the Chofetz Chaim did with that Jewish Russian soldier who was so rude and abusive. Had he focused in on his boorishness, the fellow would have remained a boor and would have hated the Chofetz Chaim. However, on the contrary, the Chofetz Chaim was able to find the righteousness in the person and thus was able to establish a connection, which eventually brought him around to true righteousness.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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From Rabbi Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com>  
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### **Rav Kook List**

#### **Rav Kook on the Torah Portion**

##### **Tefillin: Connected to Life**

The Sages taught that tefillin must be treated with respect:

"One who hangs his tefillin [on a hook or by the straps] - his life will be suspended. The darshei reshumot [homiletical exegetes] taught: This is what it says, "Your life will hang in doubt before you" (Deut. 28:66) - this refers to one who hangs his tefillin." (Berachot 24a)

One who hangs tefillin on a hook or holds them by their leather straps is certainly acting carelessly. This behavior indicates a cavalier attitude to such a holy object. But does it truly endanger one's life?

##### **Spiritual Ties**

A healthy person has an innate love of life. If a person needs to be convinced to stay alive - this is a sign of serious illness, either physical or mental. Normal people do not require logical arguments or reasoned rationales to live.

The curse of "your life will hang in doubt before you" refers to such an abnormal state, when one's very survival is in question. It indicates grave danger or illness.

It is especially instructive to note the Hebrew text, which speaks of one whose life is hanging meneged - 'before' or 'across from' him. In other words, one's life is not within one's natural realm of existence. It is external, outside one's inner being. The will to live is no longer obvious and innate.

This tragic condition has a corresponding spiritual state. For those who are spiritually healthy, the fundamental teachings of the Torah and its axioms of faith are firmly ingrained. The spiritually whole do not require intellectual arguments or proofs to know that they share the destiny of Israel and its special mission. This natural connection to God and Torah is reinforced by observing mitzvot and love for the Jewish people.

The mitzvah of tefillin in particular helps bind us to the path of Torah in thought and emotions. The tefillin shel rosh, worn over the mind, influence our thinking; and the tefillin shel yad, worn across from the heart, impress holy emotions. By wearing tefillin, "God's Torah will be in your mouth" (Ex. 13:9) - the Torah's teachings will be naturally on our minds and lips.

This state is acquired by wearing tefillin regularly and guarding them with respect. Even when one removes one's tefillin, they should be stored in a safe and secure location.

Hanging one's tefillin on a hook, however, indicates an unsteady state. Such behavior reveals a distant and estranged attitude, a tenuous connection to Torah. This is like an ailing individual whose connection to life is shaky.

The Sages were not just calling our attention to the linguistic similarity between 'hanging one's tefillin' and one's life 'hanging in doubt.' They were dorshai reshumot - they had insight into how impressions (reshumot) are made on the soul. They understood that the spiritual process is similar to the physical one. A person who carelessly hangs his tefillin on a hook - whose connection to holiness and spiritual matters is tenuous - is like one who's will to live is in question - "and your life will hang in doubt before you."

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I on Berachot 3:50, p. 107)

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

### Some Shatnez Basics

#### By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: I keep reading about shatnez showing up in strange places: ladies sweaters, children's clothes, and even baseball gloves. Am I required to take my family's entire wardrobe to a shatnez laboratory to have everything checked?

Question #2: "What does a shatnez tester look for?"

Question #3: "The importer told me that the garment was made from a blend of hemp and wool, which should involve no shatnez concern. As there was no authorized shatnez tester in town, I did what I thought was the next-best thing – I brought the garment to a local observant tailor, to have him check it. He carefully checked the threads and guaranteed me that the garment contained no linen. Only after I wore the garment many times did I meet a great Torah scholar and mention this incident in passing. The talmid chacham told me that I should not be so certain, and he offered to compare the material in my garment to linen threads he had available. And indeed, it was clear that he was correct. The threads in my garment were made from wool and linen, not hemp, and I had been violating a Torah prohibition the entire time!"

Does this story sound contemporary and familiar? As a matter of fact, this story happened in 1650 in the city of Vilna – twenty years before the Dutchman van Leeuwenhoek invented the microscope. In those days, the only "scientific" means of checking whether a material was linen or hemp was to take a sample and see if a candle would get it to burn, since hemp is more flammable than linen (Rama, Yoreh Deah 302:2). Others opposed the reliability of this test (Piskei Teshuvah 302:1, quoting Shu"t Penei Yehoshua).

Thus, we see that shatnez problems are not exclusively a result of modern manufacture. However, in modern clothing one may find shatnez in everything from sweaters and skirts to scarves; and from bedding and button loops to baseball gloves.

Before delving into contemporary questions, we must first understand some of the laws taught in this week's parsha. The prohibition of shatnez exists only if the garment is made from a blend of sheep's wool and linen, but that wool of other species does not make shatnez. Thus, wool made of camel's, rabbit's or goat's hair mixed with linen is not shatnez (Mishnah, Kilayim 9:1; see Rambam, Hilchos Kilayim 10:2). ("Wool" is simply hair that is soft and can be used as cloth.) The Mishnah (Kilayim 9:2) records that certain combinations, such as silk and wool, were prohibited because of maris ayin, since this raises suspicion or may be misinterpreted that someone is wearing shatnez. However, the Rishonim already conclude that this concern exists only when the material that may be confused with wool or linen is not commonly obtainable, but that no prohibition of maris ayin exists once people become familiar with its availability (Rosh, Hilchos Kilayim). Most people are surprised to discover that a garment made of a blend of linen and either mohair or cashmere is not shatnez! Why is this? Because neither mohair nor cashmere are made from sheep's wool, but

from the hair of goats! Mohair is processed from the hair of an angora goat. Although goats of this variety are now raised around the world, originally they were developed in Turkey. (The current capital of Turkey, Ankara, used to be called Angora.)

Cashmere is the wool of the Kashmir goat, which was originally native to central Asia, as its name indicates. Thus, if no sheep's wool thread was mixed into the mohair or the cashmere, the existence of linen in the garment will not make it shatnez.

### The Majority Rules

By the way, a garment could contain both linen and sheep's wool and still not be shatnez! How could this be?

When a thread is spun from a mix of fibers, the halachic status of the thread is determined by what composes most of the thread's fiber content and ignores the existence of other fibers inside the thread (Mishnah Kilayim 9:1). The minority of fiber is halachically bateil, or nullified, to the majority fiber content in the thread. Thus, threads spun from a mix of mostly cotton fiber with some linen fiber are considered cotton and can be used lichatchilah in a woolen garment. Similarly, a garment consisting of threads made of a blend of mostly mohair but including some sheep's wool fiber that are woven or sewn with linen threads is not shatnez and may be worn.

Here is a very practical example of this case – in a dress that was tested recently in a shatnez laboratory.

A knit dress whose content label listed 70% wool and 30% silk, which should not be a shatnez problem, was brought to a shatnez checking service. However, the tester noticed that the front panel of the dress was made of thread that was a blend of linen and cotton fibers. If the cotton is the majority, there is no halachic problem with this garment, since this would be considered a cotton thread. However, if the majority component of the threads is linen, the garment is shatnez.

Here is another recent case where the halacha is more complicated: The label of a sweater brought to a shatnez checking service accurately described its content as: 28% viscose, 20% nylon, 15% lamb's wool, 15% cotton, 10% polyester, 6% metallic fiber, 3% cashmere and 3% angora. A decorative cloth ornament, whose content was not included on the label, was sewn onto the sweater. The shatnez checker tested the ornament and discovered that it was made of a blend of linen and cotton, where linen was the majority. Thus, the decorative fabric was halachically considered linen, and the material of the main sweater included wool. However, it is possible that there is no shatnez problem here because the wool in the sweater fabric was a minority component. Thus, although there was both linen thread and wool fiber in the garment, it would not be shatnez.

Why did I say only that "it is possible that there is no shatnez problem?" The authorities dispute whether shatnez exists when there is noticeable wool fiber in a thread which is mostly made from a different fiber. The Rosh (Shu"t 2:5), Mishnah Rishonah and Tiferes Yisrael (both to Kilayim 9:1) consider this shatnez, since the wool is noticeable; whereas the Chazon Ish (Yoreh Deah 181:9) rules that this is not shatnez, contending that the definition of a thread is its majority component, and that the minority wool component of the thread is bateil. In the case at hand, the wool may be noticeable in the thread, since there is a sizable amount of lamb's wool in a blend that contains many very non-wool type fibers. It may indeed be that according to the Rosh the wool is not bateil in this case, and that this sweater is therefore shatnez. On the other hand, according to the Chazon Ish, since most of the fiber in the thread is not wool, the wool component of the thread is bateil.

### Hanging by a Thread

Linen or wool fiber is bateil only as fiber. However, a thread of linen that is woven or otherwise attached into a woolen garment renders the garment shatnez, and there is no bitul (Rosh, Hilchos Kilai Begadim

#5 quoting Tosefta; Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 299:1). Even a single linen thread in a large woolen garment renders the entire garment shatnez. In addition, if a spun thread is mixed into a larger thread, then there is a shatnez problem min haTorah even if there is only one linen thread in a large garment.

This distinction is extremely important, as we see from the following case:

A 100% pure wool sweater contained a long green thread knotted into its seam. The green thread consisted of a cotton braid, which was not mentioned on the label, but should not present any problem either. However, the core of the cotton braid contained a linen thread. Thus, the 100% pure wool sweater contained a linen thread. (We will soon see that according to many authorities this particular sweater was not shatnez for a different reason.)

What if they do not touch?

If a garment contains wool thread on one side and linen in a different place -- so that the wool and linen do not touch, is the garment shatnez? This issue is disputed by the Rishonim. The Rash (Kilayim 9:1, 9) one of the early Baalei Tosafos, (this is Rabbeinu Shimshon, author of the Tosafos commentary to Zera'im, Taharos, Pesachim and Kesubos, and should not be confused with the more frequently quoted Rosh, Rabbeinu Asher, who also authored commentaries on the Mishnah, Gemara and Halacha, and lived somewhat later than the Rash), rules that shatnez requires that the linen and the wool actually touch, but that one is permitted to wear a garment containing wool and linen threads that are on different parts of the garment. According to the Rash, the prohibition of shatnez is that there is a "combination" of wool and linen, but this is avoided when the wool and linen are separated by other materials.

Based on this Rash, a common custom was to attach a linen atarah to a wool talis by having cotton cloth act as the "mechitzah" between the wool and the linen.

However, the Rambam rules that wool and linen threads on different parts of a garment constitutes shatnez min haTorah. In his opinion, the Torah prohibited a garment containing both wool and linen, even if the linen and wool themselves do not touch. Thus, according to the Rambam, the separating cotton does not change the garment from being shatnez, and wearing the above-mentioned talis is a mitzvah habaah be'aveirah.

Similarly, whether the wool sweater with the cotton green thread containing a core that is a linen thread is shatnez or not is dependent on this dispute between the Rash and the Rambam, since the linen thread does not touch the wool but is surrounded by cotton. According to the Rambam, wearing this sweater involves a Torah prohibition of shatnez, whereas according to the Rash, it is permitted!

How do we rule?

The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 299:2) rules like the Rambam that a garment is shatnez even if the wool and the linen threads are separated by other materials. Thus, Sefardim, who follow the Shulchan Aruch's rulings, are certainly prohibited from wearing this sweater. Among Ashkenazi authorities, the Rosh, the Rama (Yoreh Deah 299:2), the Magen Avraham (9:8) and the Eliyah Rabbah (Orach Chayim 9:6) rule like the Rash, whereas the Mishkenos Yaakov (Yoreh Deah Shu"t #70) Shenos Eliyahu (9:1)1, Artzos Hachayim rule like the Rambam. I note that Rav Chayim Kanievski notes that the prevalent practice is to rule like the lenient opinion (Derech Emunah, Hilchos Kilayim, Hilchos Kilayim 10:41).

What have we learned so far?

1. We have learned that shatnez exists only when there is sheep's wool, but not when the wool is from other species, and that therefore pure cashmere or mohair blended with linen is not a shatnez concern.

2. We have also learned that some testing for shatnez existed even before the microscope, but there was halachic controversy concerning whether one could rely that this testing is reliable.

3. In addition, we have learned that threads spun from a mix of cotton and linen fibers are considered cotton and when blended in a woolen garment are not shatnez. However, threads of linen woven into a garment that is a cotton/wool blend is shatnez, even when the blend is mostly cotton thread.

What have we not yet learned?

1. Are baseball gloves a shatnez problem?
2. Which garments must be checked for shatnez.
3. How a shatnez tester works.

To answer these and other shatnez questions we will need to read a future article.

1 We should note that in his notes to Shulchan Aruch (299:8), the Gra, who also authored Shenos Eliyahu, appears to accept the Rash's approach.

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### **Reaching Old Age: Victory or Defeat? Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski (TorahWeb.org)**

There are things that we don't like to talk about, and there are things we don't even want to think about. The situation of the elderly belongs to the latter category. What we owe the old is reverence, but all they ask for is consideration, not to be discarded and forgotten. There is a Yiddish aphorism: "One father can take care of ten children, but ten children cannot take care of one father."

Don't get me wrong. There are children whose kibbud av vo'em, caring and respecting their elderly parents is exemplary, and in full compliance with the demands of Torah, but there are also many cases where children turn their backs on their elderly parents, and if they do care for them, they consider it an act of charity rather than a privilege.

The problem is twofold: the attitude of society toward the elderly and the attitude of the elderly to being old. We pray for old age, but once we attain it, it is sometimes considered a defeat instead of a victory.

More money is spent in the U.S. on concealing the signs of old age than on dealing with heart disease and cancer!

The U.S. is a culture that worships at the cult of productivity. A 55 year old person has great difficulty competing for a job for which there are 25 year old applicants that are equally qualified. The employer considers not only how many years of work he can get from the applicant, but also that the health care costs that he must bear for an older employee are likely to be much greater than for a younger person.

We are generally in denial of becoming old. I was invited to participate in a series of lecture for people in the 35-45 age group. The series included lectures on financial planning, preservation of health, retirement planning, and psychological adjustment. The series was widely publicized, and a hall accommodating 300 people was rented. 18 people showed up! "Other people may need to plan for their retirement, but not me. I'm going to be healthy and productive at least until 85. I'm immune to the wear-and-tear diseases of aging: emphysema, arthritis, Parkinsonism, they're not in my future." I only hope you're right.

Let's face the inevitable. Regardless of what you hear, Social Security and Medicare are headed for bankruptcy, the only difference of opinion is in what year. When I paid my first social security tax, I shared the support of one elderly recipient with 17 other taxpayers. Today, the cost

of caring for one elderly social security-Medicare recipient is borne by 2.6 people. Not only is this a massive chunk out of one's paycheck, but the person who is paying in so heavily cannot help but wonder whether he/she will ever get any benefits. When one no longer works, one becomes a social liability, a drain on resources.

Who is at fault for this burden and the bleak future? Why, those people who stubbornly hang on to life past 66! And what is medicine doing? Continually prolonging life! In 1980, it is estimated that there were about 15,000 centenarians in the U.S. That figure more than doubled by 1990 and is progressively rising.

An important statistic is that 80% of Medicare expenditures are during the last six months of life. In Oregon, certain medical procedures are not covered by Medicaid for people over 80. The current administration has set its sights on saving Medicare, and it should be quite obvious where the major cuts will be made.

Depression in the elderly is common. As one grows older, the chances of losing one's spouse increases, and the person is alone. Alone, and feeling quite useless. A 75 year old widow or widower has children that are in their forties, and they have young children for whom they must care. These latter are the "sandwich generation," caught between responsibilities to elderly parents on the one hand and young children on the other. Many of the elderly do not have financial resources to maintain their independent life style. The time, energy and finances of their children are limited. How should these be distributed?

When one can no longer live independently, what are the choices? Senior citizen apartments, assisted living, nursing homes or moving in with children. The latter may be very welcome, having a built-in baby sitter and someone to prepare meals when both husband and wife work. But it can also be an imposition. A child may have to give up her bedroom. Grandfather can't stand the loud music, and totally disapproves of how the kids dress.

For some people, life consisted of work, and periods in between work were to recharge the batteries for the workday. But now what? What is my life for? Every human being has a need to feel needed. In what way am I needed? There is no greater anguish than emptiness and boredom. There are senior citizen centers that provide activities, but when we are younger, we live with a vision, and recreation is a poor substitute for vision. When we are younger, we live with dreams, but now all we have is memories.

There are solutions, but these require a radical change of perspective. We must reject the prevalent cultural attitude toward the elderly. We must prepare ourselves for the golden years, and children must come to a Torah concept of relating to the elderly.

There are men and women who, in their working years availed themselves of the wisdom of the Jewish heritage, the vast treasury of Torah, whether Talmud, history or ethics. They may have shiurim (lectures), study groups, or can learn on their own. There is now an abundant source of learning materials, on disc and on the internet. Work was to earn a living, but was not the primary goal in life. Shabbos prepared them for enjoying leisure, even without playing golf or fishing. They prayed and developed a relationship with G-d. Of them the psalmist said, "A righteous man will flourish like a date palm, like a cedar in the Lebanon he will grow tall. Planted in the house of G-d in the courtyards of our G-d they will flourish. They will be fruitful in old age, vigorous and fresh they will be" (Psalm 92:13-15).

Torah teaches that life has an intrinsic value, independent of one's actions. If someone is ordered, under the threat of death, to kill a person, he must accept martyrdom. "What makes you think that your blood is redder than the other person's?" (Pesachim 25b). In other words, why should you think your life is worth more than the other person's?

Suppose that the person who is ordered to kill is a great scholar, a great scientist, a great benefactor to society, and he is ordered to kill a person who is a degenerate scoundrel, who has been a burden to the

community. The halacha is the same. He must accept martyrdom. "What makes you think that your blood is redder than the other person's?" At any age and in any condition, one should not lose a sense of value.

If one lives a life of being close to G-d one need never feel alone. As a medical intern, I was called to administer an intravenous antibiotic to a patient. The patient's nurse told me that the patient was very depressed. While undergoing orthopedic surgery, he had a cardiac arrest. The surgeon promptly opened his chest and massaged the heart, restoring its function. When the patient emerged from surgery, he learned what had transpired.

After I administered the antibiotic, the patient said, "Are you a rabbi?" When I told him that I was, he said, "I'm not Jewish, but will you say a prayer with me?" Assuming that he was familiar with Psalm 23, I said it with him. When we came to the verse, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me," the patient choked up. We finished the psalm and he thanked me. I stopped to see him the next day, and the nurse told me he was a changed person, bright and vivacious. He greeted me with "Hi, doc!" then said, "When I found out that my heart had stopped, I thought, 'That can happen at any time, when no one is around to get it started again, and I was afraid of dying. But when we said 'though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me,' I knew that was said about me. When my heart stopped, I was in the valley of the shadow of death. I am now 72. I served on the police force for 38 years and I helped many people. I feel safe that G-d will be with me."

As I left, he said, "That prayer beat the h--- out of the antibiotic." If one lives close to G-d, one need never fear of being alone.

The Torah requires, "In the presence of an old person shall you rise and you shall honor the presence of an elderly person" (Leviticus 19:32). The verb on the latter phrase is ve'hadarta, which indeed means to honor, which is giving something to the older person. Rabbi Joseph Adler remarked that ve'hadarta also means "to return," i.e., to get something back from the older person.

Old people are repositories of wisdom. The Midrash states that when the Israelites were about to leave Egypt, Moses took upon himself the task of taking the remains of Joseph with the, but he did not know where Joseph was buried. Moses asked Serach, the daughter of Asher, who was the sole survivor of Joseph's generation, and she told him where Joseph was buried.

But why did Moses have to consult Serach. After all, Moses could speak to G-d at any time. Why did he not just ask G-d? It is because Serach had knowledge which could not be equaled even by direct contact with G-d. Serach knew Joseph and the patriarch Yaakov. Contact with the great tzaddikim is irreplaceable. This is what the elderly can offer us. The younger generation thinks it has all the answers. Sure, grandchildren can program the VCR for computer-illiterate grandparents, but there is no substitute for the wisdom gathered in years. The Talmud states that Reb Yochanan would rise to honor an elderly heathen. "How many experiences this man has survived." Rashi comments, "How much suffering he had, and how many wondrous things he witnessed."

We have to show our children that we not only revere the elderly but also that we appreciate their wisdom.

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