

A taste of Shabbat

Kedoshim 5776

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Translated and edited by his students

"Sanctifying God's name in the World"

If everyone is here we can begin

Our parsha begins with an almost unique opening verse:

דַּבֵּר אֶל כָּל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל¹

Speak to the whole nation of Israel

Rashi explains that the parsha was delivered in a "Hakhel" a mass meeting of all the men women and children. Similarly the first mitzvah we received, whilst we were still in Egypt was delivered in the same way

דַּבְּרוּ אֶל כָּל עַדְת יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּעֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם אִישׁ אִישׁ לְבַיִת אֶבֶת שֶׁה לְבַיִת²

Speak to the whole nation of Israel and tell them on the tenth of the month to take a goat..

This is the introduction to the world of holiness we enter in our parsha – the entrance card is "the whole nation of Israel". Just as the whole nation had to be told to leave Egypt, and everyone his only personal Egypt – so everyone is able to reach the level of "you will be holy". Every religion talks about holiness, only the Torah sees it as an inclusive idea for the masses. Holiness is not an unachievable level for us – we are all invited to strive for it.

No Filters

There is another point – usually God passed the Torah via a hierarchy – He taught Moshe, who passed on the Torah to Aaron, from there to the elders of each tribe, and then to the people. Each stage has a filter – but our parsha was taught directly – Aaron the priest and I received it in the same way.

This is important, because if it was not so, and not everyone would be able to reach the level of holiness and still live a life, why did God bring our

holy soul into a physical body with forces trying to bring it down all the time?

The opening verse of our parsha is both a mitzvah and a promise. Every week we try and show how the opening verse of the parsha is an indication of its content – this week it is an easy task – The phrase Kedusha , holiness appears in the middle and also in the last verse of the parsha

וְהֵייתֶם לִי קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה'³

And you shall be holy, because I, God, am holy

How can this be the reason (that appears in the first and last verses of the parsha) for us to be holy? If God is holy, how can we be too?

Its all down to us

Our Rabbis ask in the midrash

*You must be holy – like God? This is why it is written "because I am holy" – my holiness is above your holiness*⁴

The simple reading of the midrash is that we will never be able to reach God's level of holiness. The Chassidic reading is very different - "my holiness IS FROM your holiness" (in Hebrew the "נ" can be read "more than" but also "from"). God's holiness comes from the world we make here below. This idea fills the world with meaning and makes it holy - now we can understand the importance of all the details in the parsha : our relationship with our parents, our relationship with God the creator, relationships between us, between man and wife, between body and soul – holiness is there in all these fields.

After the death of the great we meet the holiness of the small.

What comes before "Kedoshim" ? "Acharei Mot" – the story of the death of Aaron's sons, the great

¹ ויקרא י"ט, ב'

² שמות י"ב, ג'.

³ שם, שם, כ"ו

⁴ Vayikra rabba 24



tragedy that taught us the lesson of staying inside the framework and reality

'ניקרבנו לפני ה' אש נרה אשר לא צינה אתם'⁵.

They offered up a strange fire that God hadn't commanded them

They were on a very high spiritual plain – but outside the framework of the mitzvot , a place without life – so they died. Ever since this story in the Torah we have dealt with very basic and seemingly profane things – food, leprosy , impurity, slander, incest – things that look terrible, but teach us, in light of what happened with Nadav and Avihu, how to reach holiness. After their death, the death of two giants, we learnt how, as small people, to become holy.

The book of man

Rashi gives us another reason why our parsha was taught to the whole of Israel

Because the majority of the main ideas of the Torah are found in it⁶

This is the view of Rabbi Chiya in the midrash, but Rabbi Levi goes even further

Rabbi Levi says – because it contains the ten commandments: "I am the Lord your God" – "I am the Lord your God" (In Kedoshim) , "You will have no other gods" – "Don't make idols" (In Kedoshim), "Do not take my name in vain " – "Don't falsely swear in my name"⁷

The same ten commandments with one big difference : The first time we heard them at Sinai we begged Moshe

דַּבֵּר אֵתָה עִמָּנוּ וְנִשְׁמָעָה⁸

May you talk to us (and not God) so that we may hear

We couldn't take it, only the heads of Israel were able to cope

וַיֵּאָל אֲעִילִי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שָׁלַח יְדוֹ, וַיִּחְזוּ אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֵּאָקְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ⁹

And God didn't punish the heads of Israel – they saw God, ate and drank.

This was Nadav and Avihu .

A process started that came to a climax with the ten commandments of *Kedoshim* .

'ויקרא אל משה... אדם'¹⁰.

God called to Moshe.. a man

God calls to the internal Moshe inside everyone of us, the internal redeemer who call pull us up – as men , not angels . The climax of Vayikra is not

the fire on the alter and the sacrifices, it is about the mundane commandments given to human men and women who keep .

We must not believe the lie that Holiness isn't for us, that life is too complicated. Moshe brings ALL of the people of Israel, anyone who left Egypt, and able in future generations to leave Egypt – has the ability to be holy – even you and me..

For more details of Rav Elon's Shiurim and to receive "A taste of Shabbat" weekly
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⁵ ויקרא, י', א'.

⁶ ויקרא י"ט, ב' ברש"י, ע"פ ויקרא רבה.

⁷ ויקרא רבה, פרשה כ"ד

⁸ שמות כ', ט"ו.

⁹ שם, כ"ד, י"א.

¹⁰ ויקרא, א', א'-ב'.