

LAMPLIGHTER

5 Iyar
Parshas
Kedoshim
1399
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's Torah portion, Kedoshim, we learn that one may not eat the fruits of a tree during the first three years after it was planted, while the fruits of the fourth year are holy. They are to be eaten only in Jerusalem. The Torah proceeds: "But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit [in all places], so that it may yield you more produce..." Thus, the objective of the first four years is the increase in yield during the fifth year.

The fifth year's increase in physical yield resulted from the fact that in a spiritual sense, too, the fruits of the fifth year possessed a quality that was lacking - not only during the first three forbidden years, but also during the fourth year when the fruits had to be eaten in Jerusalem. Why, then, could these more spiritually elevated fruits be eaten wherever one desired? Why were they not restricted to the confines of the Holy City of Jerusalem, as were the less spiritual fruits of the fourth year?

Before the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chasidism, became renowned, it was his custom to wander from town to town and village to village, because one of his approaches to Divine Service was to inquire among Jews as to their welfare, and elicit responses of praise of G-d for their well-being.

He was most gratified to hear the loving praises with which they responded to his queries: "Blessed be His Name," "Praise the L-rd," "The loving G-d does not forsake," and so on.

It once happened that the Baal Shem Tov visited a town where there lived an eminent scholar who for the past fifty years had been piously abstemious, studying Torah day and night in holy isolation. He would sit in his talit and tefilin until late afternoon, and fast until after the evening prayer. He would then break his fast with a crust of bread and water.

The Baal Shem Tov once entered this scholar's "seclusion chamber," which was in a corner of the synagogue, inquired after his health, and asked him whether his needs were being met. The recluse ignored him. After the Baal Shem Tov repeated his questions a number of times the scholar became angry and showed his visitor the door. Said the Baal Shem Tov to the scholar: "Rabbi, why don't you provide G-d with His sustenance? You will starve Him, G-d forbid, and He will depart from the world."

Hearing these words, the scholar was perplexed: such strange words about seeing to G-d's needs so that He should not starve?! The Baal Shem Tov noticed the scholar's bewilderment, and explained: "Jews exist by virtue of G-d's sustenance, but what sustains Him? This is answered by King David in Psalms, wherein he says: 'You, Holy One, are enthroned upon' - i.e., You are sustained by - 'the praises of Israel,' by the words of praise that Jews give You for their health and livelihood."

To make this world a "dwelling place for Him," so that G-d be eminent in this world, is the purpose of all creation. Accomplishing this requires more than Torah study. It requires - as indicated by the Baal Shem Tov's conduct - that we praise and acknowledge G-d for even the simple things in life, for all things are to be imbued with holiness.

So, too, regarding the fifth year's fruits. The highest state of holiness is attained not by eating the fruits in Jerusalem; it is achieved by transforming the whole world into the Holy City of Jerusalem.

Compound Verses

By Naftali Silberberg

This week's Torah reading manages to compress 51 commandments into 64 short verses. (In the entire Torah, only one - considerably longer - portion contains more mitzvot than Kedoshim.) Some commandments occupy several verses, while others take up only part of a verse, sharing "verse space" with another mitzvah. It is interesting to analyze these "compound verses" in an endeavor to find the unifying thread between the lumped-together commandments. After all, there must be a reason why the Torah chooses to group together two mitzvot - often seemingly disparate ones - in one verse.

Let us examine a sequence of three such compound verses in this week's reading.

"You shall not go around as a gossipmonger amidst your people. You shall not stand by [the shedding of] your fellow's blood. I am the L-rd."

Jewish law forbids not only speaking of another's flaws or misdeeds, whether imagined or true, but also prohibits "harmless" gossip. Information that you happen to know about another is confidential. It is none of Mr. A's business what Mr. B did yesterday.

This may lead one to believe that he should close his eyes and ears, and take no interest in his fellow's affairs - it's private business. Therefore the verse continues, "You shall not stand by [the shedding of] your fellow's blood." The biblical commentator Rashi explains this command: "Do not stand by, watching your fellow's death, when you are able to save him - for example, if he is drowning in the river, or if a wild beast or robbers come upon him."

You have to take a keen interest in your neighbor's welfare. Otherwise, you won't be able to rush to his aid in his time of need. You need to know when his bank account is in the red, or you won't be able to give him the loan he needs. If you are oblivious to his troubles, you won't be able to lend a helping hand or ear. But at the same time, unless there is a beneficial reason to share this information, it must remain confidential.

"You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your fellow, but you shall not bear a sin on his account."

Rebuking a wrongdoer is indeed a mitzvah, but there is a fundamental prerequisite: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart." If the rebuke stems from ill-will towards the transgressor, then you have not fulfilled the mitzvah. The rebuke will certainly be disregarded, because the recipient of the chastisement will sense the animosity behind the harsh words. Instead, you, the rebuker, will bear a sin - the sin of unduly embarrassing and causing angst to another Jew.

An alternative explanation:

If someone wrongs you, do not allow hate to silently fester in your heart. Rebuke him. Confront him with his actions. If done with respect and composure, chances are that the offender will apologize, or perhaps explain his actions, and friendly relations can resume. Silence, on the other hand, will never accomplish anything.

"You shall neither take revenge from nor bear a grudge against the members of your people; you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the L-rd."

The mitzvah of loving your fellow goes well beyond the societal norms of helping out and caring for a friend. Such love is a subtle form of self-centeredness - it's helping another because he is your friend. True love expresses itself in abstaining from taking revenge or harboring a grudge against someone who has wronged you. If you can control your natural impulse to get even, you know that you truly care about that individual. After all, it's coming at the expense of your own ego and prestige.

Slice of LIFE

Uncle Hershey

By Melody Masha Pierson

When I was a little girl, I had an Uncle Hershey. Actually, he was my mother's first cousin, but I knew him as Uncle Hershey. I can still remember being five-years old, sitting on his lap, playing piano. Uncle Hershey and my mother were best friends. They were actually more like brother and sister than cousins. Maybe that's why I came to call him Uncle Hershey. Next to my mother, he was definitely the funniest person I knew. And the most fun.

Over the years, I watched as they pulled practical jokes on each other, some of them so funny, anyone would be in tears, laughing. When times got rough, my mother was there for him and he was there for her and he was always there for both of us. Uncle Hershey, or "the Dummy" as we would call him because he was so easily fooled, was no fool. He was also, next to my grandfather, the only real father figure I had. My own father and mother were divorced and well, you can imagine the rest.

Uncle Hershey made me feel safe. I could always turn to him. I loved him desperately and he saw me through my youth, adolescence, and on. He had a warm and sly wit about him and was as cuddly as a teddy bear. He liked to be the boss of everyone as I used to say, and his enormous ego was oddly endearing and comical. My mother and he were stuck to each other, like glue. They were Bonnie and Clyde, Burns and Allen, Lucy and Desi. My mother always let him think he had the upper hand. That was part of the fun and as much as he was the voice of reason, he was also the voice of whimsy and nonsense. I trusted him with my life, my world, my

children and I thanked G-d for Uncle Hershey all the time. Especially when money was tight or I found myself in a jam. He always rescued me. That was one of his many jobs.

About four-and-a half years ago, my mother died. The night she was slipping away, in the intensive care unit, friends and family were gathered around the bed. One of my friends kept calling Uncle Hershey to rush to the hospital. He didn't get there in time. To be fair, during the last year or so of my mother's life, he tried to help her to the best of his ability. We all did, in our own ways. So many people loved her. She was a vibrant and passionate woman, full of humor and kindness. No one knew this better than me and my Uncle.

My husband, children and I were devastated by her loss. The fallout was terrible. Sadly, my uncle and I were left torn into pieces, separately and separated - for the first time. We lost her and it tore us apart from each other.

My first clue that something was wrong was when he didn't come to the cemetery. Then, he didn't come to the shiva, the mourning, which only lasted one day because the following day was Rosh Hashana. And then I didn't hear from him at all. Only much later did I realize that he just could not bear the pain of her death.

I found myself angry with him. Where was he and why had he deserted me? I felt guilty about losing my mother and sometimes still do, thinking I should have done more for her. Maybe he was angry with me too? I didn't know. I do know that at one point I fired off an emotional email to him regarding some family matters and I really let him have it. The second after I pressed "send" on my computer, I regretted it.

Something was very, very wrong. All I felt was rage and betrayal and loss. I had lost her and now I had lost him. And he wasn't calling me back -

for the first time in forty years.

And there were always reminders of him, as there were and always are reminders of my mother. All those jokes we pulled on each other; the secret code languages we made up just for fun. He was a part of me. Like my mother was a part of me. No matter how angry or hurt I was, I couldn't let him go. I couldn't not miss him. Even if... even if, I thought I was right and he was wrong. All I knew was something had gone terribly wrong and I didn't know how to fix it. Until today.

This morning I woke up and implemented my new exercise regime. After a light breakfast, I went on the treadmill, did some strength-training and then some stretching exercises. I am getting into the best shape I can for upcoming surgery, a double lung transplant that I need due to the same illness that took my mother. After my workout, I went downstairs, opened my computer and looked at my calendar. The first seder was coming upon us. I have plans to be with my Rabbi and his family. I remembered that last Passover, he spoke about our own personal exiles and how we must bring ourselves out of Egypt so that "next year may we meet in Jerusalem".

My relationship with my Uncle has been in exile. This had gone on too long. Without doubt, without one flinch, I picked up the phone and called his office. When his secretary asked who was on the line, I told her to tell him it was his "long, lost niece". He picked up immediately. "Hello there..." "Hello back to you!" His voice was like a warm blanket. We talked about our children, our health and made plans to have supper the following week.

One phone call completely erased over four years of sorrow, anger and longing. It all simply vanished. We had finally met up again on the other side of the Sea of Reeds. We were soon to be on our way, as if we had never been separated.

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ISSUE 1399

B"H

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Directives for Collel Chabad in Jerusalem

This letter was sent to R. Azriel Zelig Slonim, one of the leaders of the Lubavitch community in Jerusalem.

26 Tammuz, 5711,
Brooklyn.

Greetings and blessings,

With regard to the public study sessions of Chassidus, you do not write where study sessions are already being held and where it is necessary to establish them. In order that no one encroaches on another's field of activity, it would be proper for you to take counsel with [all the following:] the chassidic mentor, R. Shlomo Yosef Zevin, [the directorate of] Collel Chabad, [Yeshivas] Toras Emes, and members of the Chabad synagogues in Jerusalem, and develop a program. When you inform me about such a program, I will try to do what is possible [to provide financial support].

With regard to issuing a proclamation [with the intent of raising money] for the free-loan fund, this point can be included in the general proclamation that, should you desire, could be issued for the coming Rosh HaShanah, i.e., that you should add the following paragraph:

In particular, I would like to motivate our friends, the members of the chassidic brotherhood in every place that they are found, concerning the most important activity of Collel Chabad: the central free-loan fund that it operates. As is well known, [providing such loans] is one of the highest levels of tzedakah. In particular, this is true because the principal that is given by the donors remains intact, with the loans being given and then given again several times [after they are repaid]. Thus every time, [the donors'] money is being used for this important endeavor.

I received a telegram from you that you are planning to organize a large-scale farbrengen for the Days of Redemption, Yud-Beis/Yud-Gimmel Tammuz, and you requested a blessing. At the time, I answered you via telegram. I would be interested in knowing the details of that farbrengen.

In that telegram, I added a note about publicizing my opinion regarding the elections. Undoubtedly, this was done in an appropriate manner.

With blessings for success in your holy work and with greetings to all the members of the executive committee,

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

How Is Chassidic Thought Distinct from Pantheism?

By Tzvi Freeman

Question: I have read many of your articles about soul matters. You often explain that G-d is somehow "divided" into "sparks," and those "sparks" are present in everything, including non-animated objects such as sand. How can this idea be reconciled with G-d's absolute unity? And what then is the difference between this way of thought and pantheism?

Answer: To answer this, it's first very important that we distinguish between "G-d" and "that which is G-dly" (G-dliness). Everything that exists is sustained by G-d and has no true reality without Him—as we say, "there is nothing else but Him"—yet not all that exists is G-dly.

Let me explain G-dliness: All of the creation is sustained by G-d's will and wisdom. However, in our world, 99.99% of the time, it is in a very disguised and hidden fashion. Often it comes to the point that one of those beings continually sustained by G-dly light will deny the very G-d who sustains it! How this is possible is beyond the scope of what I am writing here. The Kabbalah describes a process of tzimtzum, contraction of light, in addition to concealment and encoding of the information that light carries—comparable, perhaps, to the way an e-mail or an image might be encrypted and encoded when sent over the Internet.

What is relevant to our issue is that in some instances, that concealment does not occur. The signal may be weak, but the source of light shines through nonetheless. These are the instances within creation we call kedushah ("holiness")—or "G-dly"; instances that point to their Creator and communicate to us His will and wisdom: Torah, mitzvahs, the tzaddikim (enlightened individuals), and any person who is carrying out G-d's will on earth.

The doctrine of hidden sparks simply states that, in fact, every creation must contain some glimmer of holiness—or else it could simply not exist. Our mission on earth is to reveal that spark within each thing. In many cases, we do that by using it for a mitzvah. In other cases that is not possible, and the only way to reveal that spark is by withstanding the challenges this article of creation may pose. Each spark has its particular path to be revealed, which corresponds to the path of the soul that comes to earth to live in a human body and to find that spark and reveal it.

A WORD

from the Director

"Do not separate yourself from the community," the great Sage Hillel counsels us in Chapter 2 of Ethics of the Fathers.

The Jewish concept of community (tzibur) is unique. When a minyan of Jews (ten) comes together, a new entity is formed that did not previously exist: a tzibur.

A tzibur is more than the sum of its parts. The spiritual power of a Jewish community is infinitely greater than our power as individuals - which is why we assemble in groups to pray, learn Torah and observe other mitzvot. The measure of sanctity brought down into the world by a community engaged in a holy pursuit is much greater than that which even many individual Jews can effect.

Take a look in our prayer book and you will find that most of our service of G-d is communal. Reciting prayers and benedictions in the plural binds the individual Jew to the Jewish people as a whole, and gives our acts of devotion an added "punch."

In truth, a Jew needs to identify himself with the larger Jewish community in order to be complete. This implies certain responsibilities, such as supporting and participating in Jewish communal efforts.

Furthermore, the actions of a single Jew have a ripple effect throughout the community. Whenever a Jew publicly increases his observance of Torah and mitzvot, it imbues others with the strength and resolve to follow his example.

It states in Proverbs, "In the multitude of people is the King's glory." May we all come together in true Jewish unity and merit G-d's ultimate blessing - the revelation of Moshiach and the Messianic era.

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Resistance

By Tuvia Bolton

About two hundred years ago lived a very righteous tzaddik called Rabbi Naftali of Ropshitz. In addition to having mastered all the works of the great rabbis of all generations, including the mystical, he was a dedicated practitioner of the mitzvah of tzedakah (charity).

His custom was that every morning he would return home from prayer, put down his tallit and tefillin, and immediately leave his home once again going from door to door collecting money for the needy. Only after distributing it to the poor people that gathered each day at his house would he sit and have something to eat. It wasn't easy work, the rich didn't easily part with their money and the less rich didn't have much to part with, but he was happy that he could serve G-d through this all-important commandment.

One day, after Rabbi Naftali finished his rounds, handed out the money, and was just about to wash his hands to eat, he heard someone knock. He turned around and saw that there was another poor man that had pushed the door open a crack and was peeking through. The Rabbi went to the door, opened it and said, "I'm sorry, you'll have to return tomorrow, my friend, I've got a lot of Torah learning to do today, and I've just handed out all the money." But the sad look on the poor man's face made him put down his towel and set out to collect money again.

However this time he really had problems. At each door he got an angry stare and sometimes a few words to boot: "What, all day you just wander around collecting money? You were just here, did you forget? Tell me, are you going to other houses or just to me?" He collected only a fraction of what he usually got, but he happily returned home, gave the grateful man the money, bade him good day, and again took the towel and went to the sink to wash for bread.

But just as he was about to pour the water on his hand, he heard the unmistakable sound of someone standing behind him loudly clearing his throat.

He turned around and there was yet another man who had let himself in, "I know, Rabbi, I know. I came late, right? Well, I know you are busy; I don't want to bother you, G-d forbid Rabbi. No, no, I'll come back tomorrow. I only want someone to tell my problems to. I won't take long. I promise." The Rabbi nodded. "My wife is not in good shape, the doctors say that soon her life will be in danger. My daughter is getting older and I have no money for her wedding. And finally, my entire house fell in yesterday," At this point, the man began weeping and Rav

Naftali again put down the towel, told the man to sit down, put on his coat and went again collecting.

But this time it was completely different. When the homeowner answered the first door (for the third time that day), instead of cursing Rav Naftali, he greeted him with a smile and open arms. "I'm so sorry that I gave you that bitter look before." He apologized, "Now I see that you must be a real tzaddik if you are willing to visit me again after what I did to you, you must think only of the poor and not of yourself at all! And instead of giving the usual ruble I'm giving you ten rubles!" So it was at the next house and all the houses thereafter. But this time when Rabbi Naftali arrived home he wasn't so happy. He gave the man the money and said with a bit of a frown, "Listen, my friend, the money is yours, I'm not going to take it back, I promise. But tell me the truth. You were lying, weren't you? Your wife isn't sick and that story about your daughter and your house falling in, it's not true either, is it?"

The poor man hemmed and hawed and finally answered sheepishly. "Well, I wasn't exactly lying, Rabbi, maybe I exaggerated a little, but not lying. I mean, my wife is pregnant and it says in the law books that when a woman goes to give birth her life is in danger, and you can even break the Shabbat." "What about your daughter's wedding?" "Well, it's true that now she is only five years old, but I always say, why wait till the last minute, you never know what may happen, right Rabbi? And about my house: well, to tell you the truth, not exactly the entire house collapsed. But my rocking chair that I found in the garbage last month broke completely, which made me feel just terrible!"

Then the visitor thought for a second and added, "Tell me, Rabbi, How did you know? How did you know I wasn't telling the truth, and if you knew, then why did you go collecting for me?"

Rabbi Naftali answered simply: "Every time I go collecting money, it is always with difficulty because there is always some obstacle to holiness. But this time, when I collected for you, everything went so easy, in fact too easy. I thought to myself: Something is wrong here, somehow or other I must not be doing a true mitzvah..."

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

The Parshah of Kedoshim begins with the statement: "You shall be holy, for I, the L-rd your G-d, am holy." This is followed by dozens of mitzvot (divine commandments) through which the Jew sanctifies him- or herself and relates to the holiness of G-d.

These include: the prohibition against idolatry, the mitzvah of charity, the principle of equality before the law, Shabbat, sexual morality, honesty in business, honor and awe of one's parents, and the sacredness of life. Also in Kedoshim is the dictum which the great sage Rabbi Akiva called a cardinal principle of Torah, and of which Hillel said, "This is the entire Torah, the rest is commentary"—"Love your fellow as yourself."

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 10 - 11 May	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	5:06	6:05
Adelaide	5:07	6:04
Brisbane	4:52	5:46
Darwin	6:13	7:03
Gold Coast	4:50	5:44
Perth	5:14	6:09
Sydney	4:49	5:45
Canberra	4:55	5:51
Launceston	4:50	5:50
Auckland	5:09	6:07
Wellington	5:00	6:00
Hobart	4:46	5:47
Byron Bay	4:48	5:42

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PARSHAS KEDOSHIM • 5 IYAR • 10 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	5.10 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	5.40 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9.42 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 AM
	MINCHA	5.00 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS	6.05 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	5.05 PM
	MAARIV	6.00 PM