



**TORAH ACADEMY**  
of Bergen County

# קול תורה

**Parashat Acharei Mot- Kedoshim**

**11 Iyar 5781**

**April 23, 2021**

**Vol. 30 No. 33**

## MAINTAINING ORDER AND PEACE

*By Kivi Davis ('23)*

Parashat Kedoshim, the second of this week's Parshiyot, includes a prohibition against cross breeding animals or plants, and against wearing an article of clothing that has wool and linen in it. The Pasuk says, "Et Chukotai Tishmoru Behemtecha Lo Tarbi'a Kil'ayim Sadecha Lo Tizra Kil'ayim UVegeid Kil'ayim Sha'atneiz Lo Ya'aleh Alecha," "You shall observe My laws. You shall not let your cattle mate with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; you shall not put on cloth from a mixture of two kinds of material" (VaYikra 19:19). Rashi says that these 3 commandments are Chukim, decrees of Hashem that have no apparent reason (Rashi VaYikra 19:19 s. v. Et Chukotai Tishmoru).

Ramban clarifies Rashi's point, saying that Hashem did not command these for no reason, for everything Hashem does has a reason. Instead, Hashem just did not reveal the reasons to us. Ramban even explains reasoning behind Kil'ayim. 1) By crossbreeding, one is defying the order of creation and 2) its results are infertile. In the six days of creation, Hashem created many species of both plants and animals and gave them the power of reproduction in order that the species continue to exist. By crossbreeding, one is defying the order of creation and saying that 'Hashem didn't make the world complete, I am now completing it'. (Ramban VaYikra 19:19 s. v. Et Chukotai Tishmoru).

These are the reasons why Kil'ei Beheimah and Kil'ei Sadeh are forbidden, but what about Sha'atneiz? What is the problem with wearing a piece of clothing that has wool and linen spun into it? The Midrash

teaches that this prohibition is related to the fight between Kayin and Hevel. Kayin was a farmer and linen is made out of flax, a plant. Hevel was a shepherd and wool is from sheep. Mixing plant, linen, and animal, wool, is the equivalent of mixing Kayin and Hevel, and that story does not end well. By keeping them separate, we are keeping Shalom and order in the world, and IY"YH we can end all mixtures of fighting siblings and be gathered from the corners of the world, BiMheirah BeYameinu.

## FULLFILLING OUR FULL POTENTIAL

*By Ezra Luber ('21)*

Parashat Acharei Mot and Kedoshim talk about many practical and essential laws and lessons. One such study is critical for our growth in Yahadut, especially during Sefirah. The Pasuk in Kedoshim says, "Lo Tikom VeLo Titor Et Bnei Amecha VeAhavta LeRe'acha Kamocha Ani Hashem Elokechem." You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the LORD." Rashi brings two critical lessons on the two different aspects of the Pasuk.

Rashi explains Lo Tikom as if someone asks his friend to borrow something from him, and he says no, and then the next day, the one who said no to him because he did not allow him the day before is taking vengeance. Bearing a grudge against someone is when they do not lend you something when they ask you in return, you give it to them. However, you say something like, and I am doing this even though you did not help me. However, we can ask, this is a perfectly logical thing to do. Why should I go above and beyond, even if my friend made a mistake before and did not help me? The answer could be VeAhavta LaReacha Kamocha", just as your friend may have made a mistake by not helping you, so too we all make mistakes. Similarly, just as we justify our actions, so too we should try to encourage them and not hold a grudge against them when they make mistakes.

Kol Torah is a community wide publication that relies on generous donations from our friends and family in the community for its continuous existence. To sponsor an issue in memory of a loved one, in honor of a joyous occasion, or for a Refu'ah Sheleimah, please contact:  
[business@koltorah.org](mailto:business@koltorah.org)

Rashi subsequently comments on VeAhavta LeReacha Kamocha, and he makes the famous comment (song) of Rabi Akiva, Zeh Klal Gadol BaTorah. We can ask, this is important, but aren't there many essential lessons in the Torah, why specifically this one. We could answer from the story of Rabi Akiva's life. The Gemara in Ketubot relates that when Rabi Akiva was younger, he was a Shepherd for Ben Kalba Savua. His daughter saw that Rabi Akiva was a high-quality person with good character and said, if I marry, you will learn Torah. We may infer that for the daughter of a wealthy individual to recognize the shepherd as special that he must stand out. Even though we know Rabi Akiva did not know Torah at all at the time, he had this quality of loving his fellow that was apparent to the daughter of his employer. This incident more than any other increased his love of his fellow because if it were not for the daughter of Ben Kalba, he would never have started learning Torah. Her realization that Rabi Akiva could be great is what led him to become one of the greatest (if not the greatest) Tannaim. If not for the push she gave him, he might have never pursued Torah greatness.

This story teaches a critical lesson. Frequently we believe that we are not great because we are overlooked or ignored and we do not realize our great potential. All Rabi Akiva needed was Ben Kalba's daughter to inform him how great he could be. However, we could sometimes be on the opposite side and overlook people who may not be as good at us at certain times or something. However, we should always see the good in every person in every situation.

Perhaps, this is the connection between the two parts of Pasuk. We have to be aware of the people around us and not think only about ourselves. We can think someone is rude when they do not help us or share with us, and sometimes we do not know the whole situation. When someone mistreats you, that is not a reason or justification for doing something to someone in return or, even worse, to denigrate someone and bring them down in the process. If we choose instead to uplift someone and encourage them, we can help them and ourselves fulfill our full potential like Rabi Akiva.

## HIGHER THAN THE MELACHIM

*By Rabbi Jake Berman*

“

For those who have been learning the Daf Yomi cycle, or even if you are jumping in now, this Parashah has new meaning. In Yoma, we are focusing on the Avodah of the Kohen Gadol in the Beit HaMikdash on the Yom HaKadosh, Yom Kippur. It can be summed up in the following way: The holiest person, in the holiest place, on the holiest day. Yet the Gemara Yerushalmi makes a fascinating comment on a Pasuk in this week's Parashah. The Pasuk (16:17) says *“VeChol Adom Lo Yiheyeh Be’Ohel Mo’ed BeVo LeChaper Ad Tzeito”* “And no man shall be in the Tent of Meeting when he comes to effect atonement in the Holy, until he comes out”. Chazal say that we learn from the word “VeChol” that even the Mal’achei HaShareit are prohibited from entering at the time that the Kohen Gadol is doing the Avodah. It is easy to understand why any human of flesh and blood must stay away during the Avodah, but Mal’achei HaShareit, who are the holiest beings? Perhaps one could make the opposite argument, maybe the Mal’achim should be allowed in! Finally, what can we learn from this?

The Yismach Moshe, Rav Moshe Teitelbaum (Parashat Re’eh s.v. VeHayah HaMakom) explains that the Mal’achei HaShareit are not allowed to enter into the Kodesh Kedoshim on Yom Kippur and only the Kohen Gadol is allowed because the Kohen Gadol went through a process of becoming great, making smart and good choices to do the right thing even when it's hard. The Kohen Gadol chose to stand up to a Nisayon and was Mitgaber over his Yetzer HaRa, this is the reason he was chosen to be Kohen Gadol. Only he can enter into the Kodesh Kedoshim. Mal’achim don't have a Yetzer HaRa (Gemara Shabbat 89a), and so they don't have to choose good over evil, they are lacking in the sense that they don't have the Kedushah of being “Omed BeNisayon”.

We can learn a great lesson from this idea. While not everyone can be a Kohen Gadol, every Yid has the ability to rise above the Kedushah of the Mal’achim by standing up in the face of a Nisayon. We often think Nisyonot are challenges that take us away from Hashem and Avodat Hashem, however Nisyonot are actually the opposite; when we stand up to a Nisayon and say no to the Yetzer HaRa, we are raised to a place above the Mal’achim.

## REASON FOR HAIRCUT AND SHAVING RULES

By Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Ta'amei HaMitzvot

Many ask the reason for the Torah's prohibiting blade shaving and removing Pe'ot. The most straightforward answer, following the Rambam's model (Hilchot Teshuva 3:4 regarding Shofar), is that it represents the Dvar Hashem.

After this crucial clarification, we may proceed with suggesting explanations for the divine decree. The Rambam writes, in both his Moreh Nevuchim and Mishneh Torah (Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 12:7), that the Torah wishes to separate us from the priests to Avoda Zara. They round their Pe'ot and shave with a razor. The Sefer HaChinuch (number 252) adopts a similar approach.

Many, if not most, do not find this a satisfying explanation. To develop an alternative, we must shift our thinking regarding Ta'amei HaMitzvot.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (in the concluding section of his "Halachic Mind") clarifies that trying to find the reason why Hashem issued a particular command is a futile endeavor. Indeed, Yishayahu HaNavi (55:8) quotes Hashem saying that "His ways are not our ways and His thinking is not our thinking." Instead, the Rav explains that we are much better off focusing on understanding how we experience a Mitzvah.

In light of this foundational insight, we observe that the Pe'ot and razors restrictions involve Hashem in the haircutting experience. The Halacha governs every aspect of life bar none. From clipping toenails to visiting the bathroom to a married couple's most intimate moments, the Halacha sets forth its rules. In this way, Halacha facilitates Hashem's loving and comforting presence to permeate every moment of our lives.

One may complain, "why can't Hashem ever leave us alone?" However, this attitude hardly serves our best interests. A loving spouse never wishes to leave the company of his/her beloved. A loving father never wants to depart from his precious child.

Many ask, "does Hashem care how we shave our sideburns and face?" However, this question reflects a lack of self-esteem. Everything we do, even the way we cut our hair matters to Him. My son Binyamin adds

that, of course, a loving father cares about his child's appearance.

Instead of attempting the impossible task of discerning the divine Will, we revel in the heartwarming and ennobling thought of Hashem's unbounded love for us and His warm embrace accompanying us whatever we do.

We may develop this line of reasoning a step further. An overarching theme in our relationship with Hashem is that as time progresses, Hashem diminishes His blatant Presence. As time moves forward, Hashem expects us to mature spiritually and discover Hashem on our own. The Tanach and Chazal express this idea in many places. For example, the Gemara (Shabbat 88a) dramatically conveys the superiority of our recognizing Hashem during the Purim miracle (when no open miracles are performed) compared to our accepting Hashem and His Torah at Har Sinai. Bava Metzia (59b), in an even more dramatic scene, champions the superiority of a decision of the Chachamim over a proclamation of a Bat Kol (voice from heaven). The Gemara (Yoma 69b) notes, in yet another moment of high drama, that when Hashem eradicated the Yetzer Hara for Avoda Zara at the time when the era of prophecy was drawing to a close, a lion left the Kodesh Kodashim.

How are we to discover Hashem in this new world of the reduced presence of Hashem? The answer is Hashem expects us to find Him. A vital means of support in this new era is the Halacha. Bava Batra 12a teaches that from the time the first Beit HaMikdash was destroyed, prophecy was taken from the prophets and given to the sages. The Gemara follows this bold statement with the even more startling assertion that "*Chacham Adif MiNavi*," that the Torah scholar is superior to the prophet.

By incorporating Hashem's regulations as to how to eat, sleep, dress, work, interact with others, and to conduct ourselves during every other human activity, we are drawn closer to Hashem. Our ongoing concern with proper Halachic comportment develops our cognizance and recognition of Hashem. Our actively incorporating the Halachic regimen to haircuts and shaving along with all of our activities promotes a far superior and much more mature relationship with Hashem than the passive prophecy based connection of the first Beit HaMikdash era.



We may take this idea even further. In the twentieth and twenty-first century, Halacha observance has become even more critical. Hashem's presence in pre-technological times was much more keenly felt. For example, if one contracted a disease, one was, for the most part, utterly dependent on Hashem for recovery, since medicine was so primitive and ineffective. The human vulnerability was at a heightened level, and we felt entirely in the hands of the Almighty and turned our eyes to Him, simply because there was no alternative.

With the blessed advance of modern medicine, it is more challenging to feel dependent on Hashem. Technological advancement has the potential to lead us to a misleading sense of independence from the Ribbono Shel Olam.

Similarly, before the nineteenth century, the origin of life and function of the universe was simple and straightforward - Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world. The introduction of scientific explanations for the origin of life that do not incorporate Hashem in the equation, however, blurred the picture. Once again, the potential for living a spiritually barren life bereft of a connection with Avinu Malkeinu emerged to the fore.

We address this challenge in the post-technological era by immersing ourselves in the learning and application of Halacha into every aspect of life.

The observance of Halacha has been a critical component of our relationship with Hashem since Moshe brought the Torah from Sinai. However, Halachic practice became even more essential with the termination of the age of prophecy and has become even more important in the past one hundred years with the continued blessed advances of science and technology.

The point is best expressed by paraphrasing Rav Chaim Rosenblatt (Why Do I Need to Learn Gemara, page 196): "Through observing every aspect of Halacha, one makes contact with the soul. One comes to view the material world from the vantage point of the Neshama. This is crucial to reawakening one's spiritual awareness amidst the darkness of the Fourth Exile, which has done much to dampen that awareness".

Thus, far from an intrusion into our lives, observing the Halachot of haircutting and shaving, along with adhering to the rest of the Halachic discipline, redeems us from darkness and emptiness of a spiritually impoverished life to the ecstasy and joy of a spiritually rich life.

**Editors-in-Chief Emeritus:** Noam Barenholtz, Harry Meister, and Eitan Mermelstein

**Editors-in-Chief:** Ezra Lebowitz and Aidan Samet

**Publishing Managers:** Ezra Luber, Daniel Kroopnick, and Asher Rauzman

**Publication Editor:** Kivi Davis and Chanan Schreiber

**Communications:** Maya Engler

**Business Manager:** Ezra Ratner

**Rabbinic Advisor:** Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Questions, comments? Contact us at:

*Kol Torah*

*c/o Torah Academy of Bergen County*

*1600 Queen Anne Road*

*Teaneck, NJ 07666*

*Phone: (201) 837-7696*

*koltorah@koltorah.org*