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Aspirational Holiness

Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman

Parshat Kedoshim opens with a transformational idea: “Be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 19:2). Particularly inspiring is that God commands Moses to communicate this message to “all the community of Israel.” Despite the emphasis throughout Leviticus on the exclusive role of the priests, holiness is not just relegated to the elite. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks persuasively argues, we find here a “radical democratization of holiness” (“From Priest to People,” *Covenant and Conversation*).

Holiness is understood by many commentaries as an outgrowth of self-control. For Nahmanides, the value of holiness is that it is born out of abstention from behaviors that are technically permitted under the letter of the law. It entails a supererogatory self-imposition of an added layer of self-discipline above and beyond strict legal responsibility. This serves to prevent a person from behaving in a repugnant way that would technically, in Jewish law, be permitted.

Nahmanides points to a parallel commandment, “You shall do what is right and good” while interacting with others (Deut. 6:18), to demonstrate that the Torah tends to supplement specific sets of laws with broader value-imperatives. We need statements such as “what is right and good” for interpersonal regulations and “be holy” for spiritual goals because “it is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man’s conduct with his neighbors and friends, and all his various transactions, and the ordinances of all societies and countries.” These generalized, guiding principles evade precise parameters and fixed regulation, and therefore require individualized application and contextual flexibility.

Elaborating on this personalized aspect of holiness, Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz, in his influential 17th century work

Shnei Luchot HaBrit, writes that the Torah cannot possibly explicitly anticipate the myriad permutations of holiness throughout time and place. There are no specific set rules on what or how much to eat, for instance, because doing so would require accounting for innumerable individual differences, shifting cultural milieus, and changing historical epochs. The Torah instead provides the general principle of holiness, and it is up to each individual, with self-awareness, to apply his or her own psychological, biological, and cultural context in fulfilling this value.

What emerges is that the imperative to “be holy” is unlike most other commandments. There is no uniform instruction, and it does not hold the status of a clear-cut, binding obligation. In his celebrated article, *Does Jewish Tradition Recognize An Ethic Independent of Halakha?*, Rabbi Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein, whose *yahrzeit* was this week, questions whether Nahmanides’ position falls under the prominent 20th century legal philosopher Lon Fuller’s “morality of duty” or “morality of aspiration” categories. Do I need to be holy under the rule of Jewish law, in the same way that I need to keep Kosher? Or is holiness an optional ideal I can choose to pursue if I so desire? In a profound and pithy response, refusing easy categorization, Rabbi Lichtenstein writes, “A Jew is also commanded to aspire.”

The relegation of holiness to the individual is both challenging and empowering. In this liminal space between choice and obligation, we are called on to aspire for subjective self-discipline and heightened ethical sensitivity. The Torah does not provide us precise details, and thereby affords us the autonomy, responsibility, and opportunity, for transformational and individualized moral refinement.

All Together

Rabbi Joshua Hoffman zt"l

Parshas Kedoshim begins with God telling Moshe, “Speak to the entire assembly (eidah) of Bnei Yisroel and say to them, “You shall be holy, for holy am I the Lord” (Vayikra, 19:1). Why was this parsha said to the entire people, and why was the unusual term eidah used to refer to them? Rabbi Ephraim of Lunshitz, in his *Kli Yakar*, explains that the word eidah refers to at least a minyan of ten people, as derived from the account of the spies, and matters of holiness require at least a minyan. Reb Yonasan Eibeshitz says that matters of holiness often involve observances beyond the usual demands made of people, adopted to reach a higher spiritual level. One should be careful, he says, not to separate himself totally from the rest of the people in adopting such practices. Whatever he accepts upon himself should allow him to remain a part of the people, and not move him to separate himself from them, as happened with some sectarians in the time of the second Beis HaMikdash.

Rav Yehudah Moshe Jacobovitz, in his *Zichron Moshe*, says that the all-inclusive term eidah is used because there are many mitzvos, particularly those involved with holiness, that can only be done by particular elements in the community. Some mitzvos can only be done by kohanim, some only by women, etc. How, then, can all of the mitzvos be observed? Only when the entire people do

all those mitzvos that apply to each sector, and when they are united as a people, can all six hundred thirteen mitzvos be observed by the Jewish people, thereby leading them to holiness.

The *Toras Kohanim* says that this parsha was said to the entirety of the people because most of the ‘gufei Torah,’ the main parts of the Torah, are included in it. Many explain this to mean that the Decalogue is included in the parsha, although in a different order than we find it when it was first presented at Mt. Sinai. Since the Decalogue, as the midrash teaches, includes all of the mitzvos, so too does this parsha. Perhaps we can explain a little differently and say that this parsha contains the main principle of the Torah. This imperative includes both mitzvos between man and his fellow man, and mitzvos between man and God, since one cannot truly love God if he does not love the people He created, and, in addition, as the *Chovos HaLevavos* taught, one may come to love of God through showing love to those He created. The word eidah, as used here, may come from the root of yeud, or appointment, as pointed out by Rabbi Menachem Leibtag. By adhering then, to this principle, we will be able to fulfill the appointment we were given at Mt. Sinai, when we received the Torah, to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Playing G-d or Serving G-d?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Every few years, new technologies resurrect a familiar question: Are we allowed to “play G-d?” The challenge has been applied to IVE, genetic screening, and cloning, to name a few arenas.

Fans of human innovation quote the Maharal of Prague, who described human endeavor as part of Hashem’s Creation: “Just as Nature operates at Divine decree, and Nature functioned during the six days of Creation as is appropriate for Nature, the same applies to the actions of a person, with his brain which is above Nature and with his deeds which are not of Nature.” (Be’er HaGolah 2:10) They suggest that Hashem wants us to create, as per Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik’s observation regarding Bereishit: “If the Torah then chose to relate to man the tale of creation, we may clearly derive one law from this manner of procedure – viz, that man is obligated to engage in creation and the

renewal of the cosmos.” (Halakhic Man pp. 100-101, Kaplan ed.)

On the other hand, former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau opposed cloning in 2003. He argued, “The moment medical science tries to take upon itself duties and areas which are not its responsibility - such as shortening life, cloning or creating life in an unnatural way - we must set down borders in order not to harm the Jewish basic belief that there is a creator of the universe in whose hands life and death are placed.”

Ramban is often quoted as opposing technological innovation. When our parshah prohibits crossbreeding species (Vayikra 19:19), Ramban comments, “Hashem created the world’s species, all of the living plants and mobile creatures, and gave them the power of reproduction... And He empowered them to reproduce

according to their kind, never changing, as the Torah says ‘according to their kind’ in Bereishit 1... One who crossbreeds species alters and contradicts Creation, as though thinking that Hashem did not complete His world as needed, and therefore desiring to aid Creation, adding creatures.”

However, Rabbi Dr. Fred Rosner points to Ramban’s comment to Bereishit 1:28, that Hashem “gave humanity power and control of the land, to act on their will with animals, crawling creatures and all that slithers in the dust,

Social Justice

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

In Parshas Kedoshim the Torah commands us regarding many mitzvos bein adam la’chavairo, mitzvos that govern interaction between man and fellow man. A person must revere his parents, pay a worker his wages on time, leave a corner of the field for the poor person, honor an elderly person and rise before a talmid chacham. A person may not hate his brother in his heart, he may not take revenge, nor bear a grudge, he may not curse a deaf person or put a stumbling block before a blind person. He must love for his fellow what he loves for himself. He may not lie to his fellow, he may not steal or cheat, he must judge his fellow with righteousness. He must love the convert and take care of the welfare of the poor in society.

A Torah Jew must mold his personality, his essence, and his character traits, over a lifetime of avodah, to strive to perfect his relationships between man and fellow man, and man and G-d. In regard to morality and fairness when carrying out judgements, the pasuk tells us:

לֹא תַעֲשֶׂוּ עֵוֶל, בְּמִשְׁפָּט--לֹא תִשָּׂא פְּנֵי-דָל, וְלֹא תִהְדָּר פְּנֵי גֹדוֹל
בְּצִדְקָה, תִּשְׁפֹּט עַמִּיתְךָ, *You shall not commit injustice in judgment; you shall not favor a poor person or glorify a great man; with righteousness you shall judge your fellow (Vayikra 19:15).*

In regard to not favoring the poor man or glorifying the wealthy man, Rashi (ibid) explains: You shall not favor a poor person: you shall not say, he is poor, and this rich man is obligated to sustain him, therefore, I will rule in favor of the poor man, and he will obtain financial support in a clean and honorable fashion; you shall not honor a wealthy person: you shall not say, “He is a rich man, and of noble lineage, how can I embarrass him and rule against him in court? There is great punishment for doing such a thing!” Therefore, the Torah warns you not to honor (unfairly) the rich man in court.

The facts of the case have to be examined through

and to build, uproot, and mine copper from the ground, etc.” He sees this as declaring that the world was given to us to use creatively, for therapeutic purposes. In his eyes, Ramban opposes attempts to coopt the power of Creation, but pursuits which seek to further Hashem’s goals via technology are praiseworthy. (The Case for Genetic Engineering, Torah uMadda Journal #9, 2000)

I’m not sure which read of Ramban is correct; what do you think?

the lens of halacha, irrespective of the financial status of the litigants standing before the judges. The court must be kosher and yosher, and rule al pi halacha, without incorrectly pitying the poor person, or violating the law by flattering the rich person. A Jew who sees Hashem before him always, will always act according to G-d’s will, not the dictates of society, nor his own will, nor the pressures of those around him.

Rabbi Josphe B. Soloveitchik, the Rav zt’l, relates a story that perfectly illustrates the prohibition of wrongly flattering a person in judgement, when the flawed judgement is based on material wealth, and not the emes (truth) of halacha (Jewish law). The Rav relates, “There were many stories about my grandfather (Rav Chaim Brisker zt’l), and please, I am not trying to somehow ‘sell’ you my grandfather. First of all, he does not need to be sold. And secondly, I am not a chassid in the sense that I tell stories in order to glorify and magnify a person. There were many stories about my grandfather’s intellect. There is no doubt that he possessed great intellectual ability... He had an excellent head, he was a genius, no doubt about it... However, I am not impressed by these abilities. They were given to Rav Chaim by the Almighty. I am more impressed by Rav Chaim’s heroism as far as social justice is concerned... He possessed a most sensitive conscience and sensitive heart, along with unlimited courage. I am telling you this so we can understand what the Torah demands...

“The halacha is that if two people (a man and a woman) die on the same day, G-d forbid, the woman has to be buried first and the man afterwards. It happened in Brisk that the most outstanding friend of Rav Chaim, a great scholar and lay leader of the community, R’ Chaim Zalman Lifshitz (RCZL), died in the morning. This man had

actually been responsible for the election of Rav Chaim as the rabbi of Brisk. Otherwise Rav Chaim would never have been elected. At the same time, a poor woman in the Brisk Ghetto died. It was in the winter, when the day is short. The gabbaim of the chevra kadisha calculated that it would make no difference whether the poor woman was buried at night or by daylight. In Lithuania they also used to bury at night. No one would come to her funeral anyway.

“RCZL has been a pillar of the community. In the morning, he would have a big send-off. In the evening not many people would come. They decided to bury him first and began to prepare his body for burial first. When Rav Chaim heard the story, he sent a messenger to the chevra kadisha to stop preparing RCZL’s body for burial. They should bury the poor woman first. If his burial had to take place at night as a result, it could not be helped.

“The chevra kadisha ignored his orders and continued to prepare RCZL for burial. R’ Chaim took his cane, put on his coat, and told his shammes to accompany him. The shammes was actually present there and told me this story. Rav Chaim told the chevra kadisha to leave RCZL and go to the ghetto in order to bury the poor woman first.

“This was R’ Chaim’s tremendous courage... He

sacrificed his own self, his own emotions. After all, he reciprocated RCZL’s friendship with friendship. But he could not help it; he was a prisoner of the law.

“One sometimes has to have a lot of courage in order to be a prisoner of the law and to carry the law out. I can tell you hundreds of such stories. These are not stories of miracle workers. In theory, a great man with a great intellect should also have a great and sensitive heart. He should particularly possess courage...” (The Rav, v.1, p.197-200).

Rav Samson Rafael Hirsch used to say: A person must be an adam kasher and an adam yosher; kasher with G-d and yosher with fellow man. Let us be sure we live a life of both kashrus and yoshrus, so we mold ourselves into the Torah personality that the Torah demands, and expects, of us.

For תורה צוה-לנו, משה מורשה, קהלת יעקב - *the Torah that Moshe commanded us is the inheritance of the assembly of Yaakov* (Devarim 33:4). We are, each one of us, bound by Torah. From judge to litigant, from wealthy to poor, from man to woman, the gadol baTorah and lay person alike, from leader of the nation to the simple man. It is according to the precepts of Torah that we must live, as we journey through life as ovdei Hashem.

Rav Soloveitchik on Kedoshim: The Holiness of Humanity

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider (Excerpted from *Torah United, Teachings on The Weekly Parashah From Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and The Chassidic Masters* (Ktav, 2023)

Concerning the opening verse of Parashat Kedoshim, Hermann Cohen, one of the most important Jewish philosophers of the nineteenth century, drew a distinction between its two clauses: “You shall be holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). The first is formulated as an imperative, because the attainment of kedushah (holiness) requires active striving; the second is a nominative equation, because God’s holiness is inherent.¹

Cohen’s views profoundly influenced Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who wrote his doctoral thesis on Cohen’s philosophy at the University of Berlin. Perhaps it should come as no surprise, then, that time and time again the Rav demonstrated that kedushah is pursued and actualized by man. Holiness can be created by flesh and blood.² Man’s greatness is his unique ability among all creations to invest an object, place, or even time with sanctity. Let us take an example from each category: the Torah scroll (object), the Temple Mount (place), and Shabbat (time).

The Embodied Torah

At first glance, the Torah scroll seems to be inherently holy. After all, the names of God, including the Tetragrammaton, grace its columns. Still, the Rav pointed out, there is a necessary human element that grants the parchment sanctity. The person preparing the parchment and the scribe writing Scripture must both be observant Jews. The scroll would not be sacred if either act was performed by a non-Jew or non-observant Jew.³

Not only does the Jew imbue the parchment and ink with holiness, but in a way the Jew can become an embodiment of the Torah itself. For example, the Rav observed this with respect to how Yaakov was carried directly by his children, the same way the Ark was borne by the Levites. “God’s word was part of Yaakov’s personality, engraved not on dead matter but living tissue. If the stone tablets were not to be carried by oxen, then living tablets certainly must not be carried this way.”⁴

A Tale of Two Mounts

The Roman governor Tineius (Turnus) Rufus once had a dispute with Rabbi Akiva over the beauty of nature. He asked him why, if God prefers the circumcised, He does not create us in that state. Rabbi Akiva responded with a question: Since they're superior to plain old wheat kernels, why doesn't the earth produce bread and pastries?⁵

The Rav explained that what Rabbi Akiva is getting at is the need to expend effort. Sanctity in this world can be created only through initiative, self-sacrifice, toil, and even pain. To sacrifice is to create holiness. Without struggle, kedushah cannot come into being.

This principle also underlies the difference in halachic status between Mount Sinai and the Temple Mount. Nothing prohibits us today from ascending Mount Sinai, where the holy Torah was revealed and given to the Jewish people. Despite being the site of the greatest revelation in human history, none of Mount Sinai's holiness has endured. When heaven receded from earth, the holiness lifted with it.

At the very same time, Halachah forbids us from treading on those areas of the Temple Mount on which the Temple stood eons ago. No earthly power can eliminate its vestiges of holiness. The reason is because hundreds of years before the first Temple stood Avraham prepared Yitzchak as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. When holiness is born of sacrifice, it has staying power. It is the human element, absent from Sinai and present at the Akedah, Binding of Yitzchak, that made all the difference.⁶

Sanctifying the Sanctified

On the face of it, Shabbat is a perfect example of inherent holiness. Unlike the festivals, we do not determine when Shabbat falls; its sanctity is independent of human calculations and declarations. The seven-day cycle that began with the first week of creation has never stopped.⁷ Nevertheless, the Rav showed how Shabbat has significant human input.

First, consider the following description of Shabbat: "...these are My appointed festivals. For six days may you perform labor, but the seventh day is a day of complete rest..." (Leviticus 23:2-3). Although Shabbat's sanctity was ordained at the end of creation, Shabbat is listed here as first among the festivals that the Jewish people sanctify.⁸

In addition, the Rav posited that Friday night Kiddush contributes something to the inherent sanctity of Shabbat. One of his main proofs is a Talmudic passage which discusses why Kiddush should be recited as early as possible on Friday night and why there is no similar

law regarding Havdalah. By ushering in Shabbat as early as possible, we demonstrate how much we cherish it; by delaying the departure of Shabbat, we show that it is not a burden.⁹ Why, the Rav asked, does the recitation of Kiddush matter? What effect can human speech have on the divine order of things? Apparently, Kiddush does bestow some level of holiness on the day, without which it would be incomplete. Kiddush does not merely mark Shabbat's sanctity, it helps constitute it together with God.¹⁰

If something is already sacred, however, by what mechanism does man add holiness? Perhaps the holiness of Shabbat has two aspects: a prohibition against profane work, and a sanctity akin to that of the festivals. God instituted the first at the beginning of time; man actively realizes the second every single week. Shabbat is, indeed, the first of the festivals, and in this regard depends utterly on the Jewish people's sanctification.

The Rav's third proof for man's role in sanctifying Shabbat is the notion of tosefet Shabbat, adding time from Friday onto Shabbat.¹¹ One wonders, are the twenty-five hours of Shabbat not already set by the Torah? Again, on some level we are responsible for some of Shabbat's kedushah. Through our intent and active engagement, the day becomes sanctified.

Exploring the Rav's Insight

From the Rav's sweeping account of holiness as emerging from man's intention and action we can distill three lessons.

First, we have the power within us to attain kedushah. It is in, rather than out of, our hands.

Second, since it depends on human effort, it is within every single person's reach. It is not the exclusive province of the elite.

Third, holiness cannot only be some kind of transcendental state of being. It can and should be pursued in the realm we inhabit, in all aspects of our daily lives. The Rav put it beautifully:

The Halakhah reversed the spiritual direction of homo religiosus. Instead of yearning to rise from below to above, from earth to heaven, from the images and shadows of reality to the plenitude of a lofty existence..., the Halakhah occupies itself with the lower realms. When halakhic man pines for God, he does not venture to rise up to Him but rather strives to bring down His divine presence into the midst of our concrete world.¹²

1. Cohen, Religion of Reason, 96.

2. Soloveitchik, Halakhic Man, 47.
3. Rabbi Benjamin Yudin, "Kiddush-Positive Testimony," Jewish Action, Spring 1998 (5758), <https://jewishaction.com/religion/kiddush-positive-testimony/> (accessed June 8, 2021).
4. Chumash Mesoras Harav, 4:29. See also Soloveitchik, "A Yid Is Gglicach."
5. Midrash Tanchuma, Tazria, §5.
6. Lustiger, Derashot ha-Rav, 171.
7. Pesachim 117b.
8. Yudin, "Kiddush-Positive Testimony."
9. Pesachim 105b.
10. Rabbi Chaim Navon, "Holiness," <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/halakha/studies-halakha/philosophy-halakha/holiness> (accessed August 5, 2021).
11. See Rosh ha-Shanah 9a.
12. Soloveitchik, Halakhic Man, 44-45.

Never Give Up on Any Jew

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

Parshas Kedoshim begins with the famous pronouncement, קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִיוּ – “You shall be sacred.” This is commonly understood as a command to strive for holiness, to live for a higher purpose, to transcend our physical drives so we live a refined, meaningful, spiritual life.

However, the Rachmastrivka Rebbe, in Amaros Tehoros, cites several chassidic works (Me’or Einayim by the Maggid of Chernobyl, and Kehilas Dovid by Rav Dovid of Tolna) that explain this phrase differently. According to their interpretation, קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִיוּ is not an obligation, a prescription, an imperative, but rather a promise. The Torah here is telling us that each and every one of us has the capacity to achieve holiness. We are all guaranteed the possibility of living holy lives. No matter how far a person has fallen, no matter how “unholy” a person’s behavior currently is, he has the potential for kedusha.

Hashem can make this promise, the Me’or Einayim explains, because, as the pasuk continues, כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' – “I, Hashem your God, am sacred.” Each person is endowed with the צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים (divine image), with a חֵלֶק חֶלֶק מִמַּעַל (“a portion of God from above”), a divine spark, an element of Hashem Himself. Therefore, since Hashem is the source of all kedusha, we each have the capacity for kedusha. Regardless of how a person conducts himself,

that spark is never extinguished; he retains his connection to the Almighty, to the source of sanctity, and so his potential for kedusha remains intact.

We can never and must never give up on any Jew, as long as he or she is connected to Am Yisrael. The Rachmastrivka Rebbe notes that Hashem told Moshe to present these pesukim to בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (“the entire congregation of Benei Yisrael”), and Rashi explains that this section was taught to the people בְּהַקְהָל, at a gathering of the entire nation. This teaches that the way the spark of sanctity within a Jew is ignited, the way the potential for kedusha can be realized, is through הַקְהָל, through connection, through community, by being an active member of, and participant in, the Jewish community. Anyone can achieve kedusha, regardless of his current spiritual standing, as long as he identifies with and remains a part of בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

In order for this to happen, however, our communities must be warm, welcoming and inviting. Of course, we must uncompromisingly adhere to our halachic values and principles. But at the same time, we must make space for all Jews, even those whose conduct does not align with our values and principles, as it is through their involvement and their participation that the inner spark can be ignited, that they can begin to grow and ultimately realize their full potential for kedusha.

Living a Truly Sanctified Life

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

The message of this week’s parasha, parashat Kedoshim, is surely one of the Torah’s most exalted messages to humankind.

In the Torah portion (Leviticus 19:2), G-d speaks to Moses and tells him to speak to all the people of Israel and say to them: קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִיוּ, כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, *You shall be holy, because I, the L-rd your G-d, am holy.* In effect, the

Torah proclaims that the Jewish people are not meant to be part of a “value-free” environment. To the contrary, Judaism has very definitive and absolute values. In fact, the Jewish people are mandated to imitate all of G-d’s positive and merciful traits so that they may reflect these values, to be קְדוּשִׁים—Kedoshim—holy.

It is not by accident that our rabbis translate Kedoshim

as פְּרוּשִׁים—perushim—separate. It is nigh impossible to remain moral in an immoral society. One cannot be a צַדִּיק—tzaddik, a truly righteous person, in Sodom, because the Sodomite environment inevitably impacts on its inhabitants no matter how hard one tries to resist the blandishments and temptations. The Torah, therefore, recommends—separate yourself, work on yourself, become a “master” in goodness and morality, so that your good qualities will impact on others. You will then be in a position to resist the evil temptations that would otherwise seduce you.

A close inspection of parashat Kedoshim shows that “sanctity” is meant to cover all aspects of life, during one’s entire lifetime, from childhood to old age. Sanctity is to be reflected in one’s relationships not only with G-d, but especially with other human beings. Not only are a person’s external appearances to be a reflection of sanctity, but even one’s internal thoughts. The sanctified behavior of the Jew is to be displayed at all times, in the synagogue and in the workplace, in the yeshiva and on the threshing floor, in the court of law and in the bathhouse. While our Torah places great emphasis on מִשְׁפָּטִים—mishpatim—laws, rules and rituals, it places even greater emphasis on achieving holiness.

When a Jew fails to live up to his/her divine potential and commits an act in which G-d’s name is desecrated, it is known in rabbinic literature as a חִלּוּל הַשֵּׁם—chillul Hashem. This expression reflects that not only has a desecration of G-d’s name been committed, but that G-d has, in effect, had His essence diminished. On the other hand, when one

performs an act of sanctity and honor, it is considered a קִדּוּשׁ הַשֵּׁם—kiddush Hashem, a sanctification G-d’s name, elevating and enhancing G-d’s name, bringing pride and glory to the Divine name.

Much of this seems to be an impossible goal to achieve, certainly too much for mere mortals. And yet, the Torah insists that it is not so. In the beginning of our parasha (Leviticus 19:2), G-d speaks to Moses and says, דַּבֵּר אֶל כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, speak to all of the children of Israel. The emphasis on the word all, which rarely appears in this biblical context, conveys a profound message. Rabbi Moshe Alshich says that this teaches that although not all people are capable of reaching the towering heights of righteousness, it is important that people not feel intimidated, and always strive to reach these lofty goals. The Torah teaches that virtually everyone is capable of reaching these great heights, since it is not a matter of understanding, but rather a matter of doing and observing.

This revolutionary message of morality and sanctification is unique to Judaism. It is a concept that the Torah introduced to humankind, and that we Jews are bidden to convey to all humanity, not by preaching, but through modeling. We need to remind ourselves that those originally given the honorific title “Kedoshim,” were not the deceased, who had given up their lives for the sanctity of G-d’s name, but rather, the living, who had lived sanctified lives.

If we were to distill all of Judaism into a single message, perhaps the most important message would be, קְדוּשִׁים תִּהְיוּ, be holy, be sanctified! Pass it on.

Don’t Evade Honouring the Elderly

Rabbi Johnny Solomon

Among the various mitzvot listed in Parshat Kedoshim is the requirement to stand up and show respect for the elderly. As we are told: ‘Stand up in the presence of the white-haired and show respect to the elderly; revere your God; I am the Lord’ (Vayikra 19:32).

But why, ask the sages of the Talmud (see Kiddushin 32b), does this verse conclude with an instruction to revere God? What additional point is being made here?

They answer by explaining that this additional phrase refers to those who close their eyes to avoid seeing an elder approaching and thereby avoid the duty to stand up for the elderly.

Admittedly, there may be those in the vicinity who

assume that this individual has accidentally fallen asleep. As a result, they will likely judge them favourably rather than think that they deliberately avoided showing honour to the elderly.

But as Rashi explains (in his commentary to Kiddushin 32b), God knows what our thoughts and intentions are, and He knows that this individual deliberately sought to avoid doing the right thing. This is why the verse reminds us to revere God – meaning that we should remember that whatever we do, God is watching.

In terms of halacha, the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 244:3) firmly rules that, ‘it is forbidden to close one’s eyes prior to coming within four amot of an elderly person in order to avoid the need to stand up for them and show

respect towards them', while the Aruch HaShulchan (Yoreh Deah 244:5) adds that just as one may not close one's eyes to avoid seeing an elderly person approaching, so too, one should not intentionally get up and move to a different location to avoid needing to stand up in their honour. As Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman explains in his recently published 'Letter and Spirit: Evasion, Avoidance and Workarounds in the Halakhic System' (Maggid, 2024), this law serves as an example of how we shouldn't avoid or evade the performance of mitzvot.

At the same time, and as Rabbi Feldman explains in his book, over the centuries various workarounds have been formulated and justified by our Sages to avoid or evade the fulfilment of certain mitzvot (eg. Heter Mechirah,

What 'Holy' Means Today

Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander

“Be Holy.” With these simple words, the Torah poses a great challenge for each of us. We, the descendants of those who stood at Sinai, are bound by 613 commandments, with a litany of details regarding their observance clarified by the rabbinic tradition. The Torah's commandments guide us both morally and spiritually, providing instruction for how we are meant to treat our neighbors and the needy, to create sacred spaces, to engage in worship, and so much more. The Torah offers a comprehensive blueprint for a deep and rich religious life.

Yet with all this the Ramban, in his commentary to the opening verse of our Parsha, claims there is more to be done than what is listed in the five books of the Torah. He points out that someone acting cleverly could find ways to technically abide by all that the Torah asks of us, yet nonetheless engage in behaviors unbecoming of a servant of God - what Ramban terms a naval birshut haTorah, a degenerate within the guidelines of the Torah.

Hence, Ramban argues, the Torah had to command us to look beyond the letter of the law, and Kedoshim Teheyu - to be holy - namely, to act in ways that accord with the Divine will, even when doing so is not specified in the Torah.

As we read this parsha, we are fighting for our future as a nation in the land of Israel and against antisemitic threats across the diaspora. This struggle must inspire us to ask ourselves what type of Jewish community do we wish to safeguard? In these tumultuous times, what are the goals of this sacred people that we wish to secure? The

Heter Iska, Prosbul & Sale of Chametz. Given this, why specifically are our Sages so insistent that we not avoid this particular law of honouring the elderly?

Rabbi Feldman answers by quoting Rabbi Yosef Shaul Nathanson (Responsa Shoel U'Meishiv, telita'ah I No. 120) who explains that, 'this commandment is specifically centred on increasing the love one has for the Torah and its scholars, and accordingly, actively embracing the opportunity is a part of its directive' (*Letter and Spirit* p. 12).

Overall, what this teaches us is that while we should strive to fulfil all the commandments, while some may be side-stepped in certain situations, some – which go to the core of our values and beliefs – may not.

responsibility of Kedoshim Teheyu is the essential spiritual genetic code that we wish to protect and actualize.

The sacred requirement to sanctify God's name, to comport ourselves in ways that reflect the Divine, takes on even greater urgency in a time of war. Addressing the Torah's instruction that the military encampment of the Jewish people must be 'holy' (Devarim 23:15), Abarbanel writes:

It is the practice of the nations in their wars that they eat every abomination and are steeped in promiscuity; stealing and theft abound, yet none are ashamed. And they similarly gird themselves in viciousness, rage, and anger, since their strength is of human origin.

Yet the encampment of Israel is holy, accompanied by Divine Providence, for their warring is conducted not through human strength [alone], but through divine power, to save them from attack and to combat their enemies. Therefore it is fitting that their actions should be holy and pure.

This certainly has been, and remains, the challenge we face in this moment - maintaining our holiness, and with it our sense of dignity towards all people, even in the midst of wartime. The fact that the IDF implements protocols to ensure the local population's safety and health that is above and beyond international law is consistent with the ideal of being holy.

There is no doubt that this is what Hashem asks of us right now: not only to follow the Torah's stated high bar for conducting war justly but to succeed in channeling greater divine light into the world through our actions. It

may not be appreciated in the short term but history will bear witness, if we live up to this mandate, of a posture of holiness on the battlefield and in our civil society. We

emulate God in this world, and preserve the Divine that lies within every one of our souls.

Yom Kippur, the Parah Adumah and the Breaking of the Luchos

Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein

קְדוּשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

Speak to the assembly of Bnei Yisrael and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, Hashem, your God, am holy (19:2)

Commenting on this pasuk, the Toras Kohanim (Kedoshim, Parshah 1) makes the following statement:

לֵאמֹר, אִם מְקַדְשִׁים אַתֶּם עִצְמַכֶּם, מֵעַלָּה אֲנִי עֲלֵיכֶם כְּאִילוֹ קִדְשְׁתֶּם אֹתִי.

This means, if you sanctify yourselves I consider it as if you sanctified Me.

According to this interpretation, when the pasuk mentions our holiness together with that of Hashem, it means not that our holiness is a result of His, but rather that it can bring it about!

This is a very striking statement, indeed! Is Hashem's holiness not inherently complete? In what way can it said to be "brought about" by our holiness?

Recognition of Hashem in the Higher and Lower Realms

The Meshech Chochmah explains. Both angels and human beings have the capacity to recognize and apprehend Hashem's greatness. The difference between the two is that the angels' apprehension of Hashem is embedded within their very nature – there exists no possibility of them failing to recognize Him. In contrast, while human beings are also capable of this recognition, it is something they must choose to do. Man is described by the Torah as being created בצלם אלקים, in the likeness of God." (Bereishis 1:27) This "likeness" refers to the faculty of free-will which man alone shares with his Creator. All other beings – both in higher and lower realms – are directed and circumscribed by their nature, whatever that nature may be. The uniquely human faculty of free-will allows man to decide whether he wishes to recognize Hashem as the Creator and Guide of the world.

At a critical point in world history, while most people were failing to recognize Hashem as both Creator and Director of the world, Avraham began the process of perceiving and apprehending Hashem and His greatness. The level of apprehension which Avraham achieved

through choice equaled that which the celestial beings experience by virtue of their nature. This process continued through the Avos and culminated in their descendants – Bnei Yisrael – being chosen to receive the Torah, a means through which this awareness could be continually accessed, developed and expressed within the practical events and experiences of physical life.

Torah, Mitzvos and Kedushah

Hashem's holiness in and of itself is perfect and complete. It is not in any way dependent on or affected by recognition by another being or the lack thereof. However, the measure of that holiness which enters the world is entirely dependent upon the thoughts and actions of those who inhabit the world. The process on our part which generates this increase is itself called "kedushah" and the Program which allows for it to happen is the Torah.

At the heart of the mitzvos of the Torah, and the overarching vision which informs and envelopes them, is the concept of Kedushah. The term "hekdesh," well known from the context of discussions relating to the Beis HaMikdash, essentially refers to dedicating something to the domain of On High. This is what mitzvos are meant to do as well. By relating to and interacting with every aspect of physical life in a Godly way, we sanctify it. This idea impacts all spheres of life, whether it is the produce of the land upon which we live through the mitzvos of Eretz Yisrael, our bodies through our actions, our minds and hearts through our thoughts and feelings, or time itself through sanctifying the festivals – elevating those occasions through the medium of korbanos. As the Toras Kohanim puts it elsewhere (Mechilta d'Miluiim sec. 23) "Nothing exists that does not have a mitzvah relevant to it." All of this serves to dedicate life in its entirety to the domain of On High – to hekdesh.

In response to this kedushah on our part, Hashem reveals more of His kedushah in the world. This is apparent in the miracles which occur in the Beis HaMikdash specifically, as well as in enhanced spirituality and increased blessing in the world generally. This means that, ultimately, the correct choices and sanctified living of Bnei

Yisrael bring about an increase in the quality of life for the entire world. Indeed, the pasuk (Bereishis 2:7) which recounts the creation of Man refers to him as a נפש חיה. These words are commonly translated as “a living soul.” However, the Meshech Chochmah explains that man as the Tzelem Elokim, who, through his choices has the power to increase Hashem’s kedushah and blessing in the world, is in fact “a soul of life,” i.e., he is the soul that promotes life in the world!

Apprehending Kedushah and Increasing Kedushah

It emerges that Bnei Yisrael’s recognition and apprehension of Hashem is qualitatively different than that of the celestial beings, since it is the product of their free will. This ultimately leads to two very different relationships with kedushah itself. Whereas angels – in their capacity of Hashem’s emissaries in the governing of the world – are capable of apprehending Hashem’s kedushah, as well as functioning as conduits transmitting it to the world, it is only Bnei Yisrael who are capable of increasing His kedushah in the world!

This, then, is the meaning of the statement of the Toras Kohanim, quoted above, that our kedushah is “the cause” of Hashem’s Kedushah. In other words, the degree to which we sanctify ourselves and our lives affects the degree to which Hashem’s kedushah is revealed in this world.

The reverse side of this is that, should Bnei Yisrael abuse their faculty of free-will and fail to recognize Hashem and to live their lives sanctified accordingly, this world will be correspondingly devoid of Kedushah and blessing. Although the higher realms will continue to recognize Hashem, as is their nature, He will, so to speak, take little comfort in this. In such situations, Chazal relate that Hashem says קלני מראשי קלני מורועי, *My Head ails Me, My Arm ails Me.* (Sanhedrin 46b) The “Head” here refers to the abstract, spiritual realm of angels that apprehend Hashem, while the “Arm” refers to the constellations through which Hashem governs the world. Hashem is saying that the apprehension of the beings in these higher realms cannot compensate for the lack of recognition on the part of human beings in the lower realms.

The Kedushah of U’va le’Tzion

This idea will give us deeper appreciation of the section which we say towards the end of Shacharis, known as Kedushah d’Sidrah, where we recite the pesukim of Kedushah and then recite them again in Aramaic. The

Gemara (Sotah 49a) makes a most startling statement, namely, that in the absence of the Beis Hamikdash, the continued existence and function of the world are due in large measure to the recitation of this Kedushah! Why is this section so important and why is its role not fulfilled by the Kedushah which we say in the chazzan’s repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei?

The Meshech Chochmah explains. While the Jewish people can bring about an increase of kedushah in the world through holy actions generally, there are certain things which are especially effective in bringing this increase about. Foremost among them are korbanos, which elevates every level of existence and brings the Divine Presence close. In the absence of korbanos, this role is primarily fulfilled by the prayers and praise of the Jewish People, which are overtly dedicated to recognizing Hashem.

The Kedushah of the Chazzan’s repetition takes place while we are yet praying. In this context, we are looking to emulate the angel’s in their recognition of Hashem. Hence, we introduce that Kedushah by saying:

נקדש את שמך בעולם כשם שמקדישים אותו בשמי מרום.

Let us sanctify Your name in the world, in the way they sanctify it in the heavens on high

However, having completed our tefillah, we then state that our recognition of Hashem through prayer and praise has achieved more than that of the angels; for it was the result of our free will and hence, is capable of generating the influx of Kedushah and Divine blessing into the world. Therefore, we introduce this Kedushah by reciting the pasuk (Tehillim 22:4):

וַאֲתָהּ קְדוֹשׁ יוֹשֵׁב תְהִלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

And You are Holy, You rest on the praises of Israel

The Meshech Chochmah explains these words to mean: “You, Hashem, who are infinitely Holy, ‘reside’ – i.e., Your Sanctity fills the world – as a result of the praises of Israel!” This effect of increasing kedushah can be achieved only by the praises of Yisrael, not even by those of the angels. Indeed, concludes the Meshech Chochmah, it is for this reason we repeat these pesukim in Aramaic, for as we know, we say things in Aramaic when we do not wish to arouse the jealousy of the angels, and there is no more coveted position than the one enjoyed by Israel, whose acts of recognizing Hashem serve to increase His Sanctity and Blessing in the world.

Haftarat Kedoshim: The Multiple Implications of Kedoshim Tiheyu as Reflected and Reinforced in its Haftarah Companions

Rabbi Dr. Michael Rosensweig (From *From Within the Tent: The Haftarat, Essays on the Weekly Haftarah from the Rabbis and Professors of Yeshiva University*, YU Press, 2011)

Rabbinic tradition establishes that the haftarah read in conjunction with the weekly Torah portion is thematically linked to the Biblical reading, thereby contributing to an enhanced understanding and appreciation of the parashah (see, for example, Tur 428). In this respect, the very choice of a companion haftarah may constitute an important dimension of parshanut and may illuminate important rabbinic perspectives on the various motifs that invariably intersect and occasionally vie for priority or emphasis in any particular parashah. The haftarah companion may illuminate the parashah in various ways: by reinforcing a central motif or providing an insightful parallel; by serving as an important contrast, corrective, or counterbalance; or simply by providing a vital perspective on the subtle or complex themes in the parashah.

In general, the thematic connection between the parashah and its haftarah is self-evident. A curious or even problematic pairing, especially in light of the wide range of alternatives, challenges us to reevaluate our previous assessment of the parashah's central ideas. The effort to comprehend Chazal's haftarah selection in such cases deepens our understanding of the parashah and enhances our appreciation of Chazal's wisdom.

The pairing of Yechezkel chapter 22 (vv. 1–16) with Parashat Kedoshim is difficult and intriguing. The focus of Kedoshim is the repeated theme of “*kedoshim tiheyu; ve-hitkadishem; vi-heyitem li kedoshim*” (Vayikra 19:2; 20:7; 20:26), which projects and is anchored in man's idealistic capacity for imitatio Dei (“*ki kadosh ani Hashem Elokeikhem*”). The parashah conveys that Jews are commanded not only to observe the norms of the Torah but to internalize Torah values and cultivate a persona of sanctity and holiness. According to the Ramban's celebrated interpretation, this charge also demands that we cohere with the spirit of halakhic law and avoid the exploitation of technical allowances that may constitute an abuse of the halakhic system. Chazal further assert that “*gufei Torah*” (essential religious tenets) are delineated in this parashah that correspond to the Ten Commandments.

These ambitious and lofty motifs are conjoined with a bracing, frightening, pessimistic haftarah that highlights

Am Yisrael's capacity for moral and ethical deviance (“*to'eivah*,” see 22:2, 11), especially their immersion in, and responsibility for, bloodshed (22:2, 3, 4, 6, 12, 13), and the consequent deterioration of Jerusalem into the “city of blood.” The navi is repeatedly challenged (such as in 22:2 “*ha-tishpot ha-tishpot et ir ha-damim*”) to confront and adjudicate a whole litany of the nation's heinous crimes. The navi proceeds (22:3) to delineate the natural consequences (“*ir shofekhet dam be-tokhah lavo itah; be-damekh... ashamt, be-gilulayikh... tameit, va-takrivi yamayikh va-tavo ad shenotayikh*”) of the nation's religious abuses, as well as Hashem's imposed punishments (“*al kein netatikh cherpah ve-kalasa le-kol ha-aratzot*”), followed by a list of specific violations that apparently justify such a bleak prognosis.

This haftarah, then, graphically depicts the debased state of Kelal Yisrael and outlines the terrifying consequences of the nation's horrific conduct. What does this choice for haftarah reflect about Chazal's understanding of the concept of kedoshim tiheyu? What profound objective justifies the jarring juxtaposition of these seemingly incongruent themes?

There is an added dimension to the mystery and difficulty of this conjunction. The accepted halakhic view is that when the two portions of Acharei Mot and Kedoshim are read in tandem, the haftarah of Acharei Mot (“*Halo ki-Vnei Khushiyyim*” (Amos 9:7–15)), rather than that of Kedoshim (Yechezkel ch. 22), is recited. The Rema (O.C. 428:8) citing the authority of the Mordechai (Megillah, no. 831) notes that this ruling is the exception to the general principle that the second Torah reading determines the choice of haftarah. While the Levush disputes this view and insists on the basis of the standard halakhic protocol that Yechezkel chapter 22 would be read for Acharei Mot-Kedoshim, the later poskim (Bach, Magen Avraham, Machatzit Ha-Shekel, etc.) almost uniformly embrace the Mordechai-Rema exception. What justifies this striking exception? What are the underlying implications of this unusual ruling regarding Chazal's perspective on “kedoshim tiheyu”?

The Mordechai, himself, attributes the preference and priority of the Acharei Mot haftarah (Amos ch. 9) to the

impulse to avoid the unpleasant theme of Jerusalem's deviant conduct (“*to'eivot Yerushalayim*”), which predominates Yechezkel chapter 22. This perspective underlies the position of R. Akiva Eiger, as well. He ruled (O.C. 428) that when Amos chapter 9 is eclipsed on Parashat Acharei Mot by the haftarah of “Machar Chodesh” (when the Shabbat of Parashat Acharei Mot precedes Rosh Chodesh), Amos chapter 9 would replace Yechezkel chapter 22 the next week as the companion haftarah for Kedoshim.

Moreover, the emphasis in Amos chapter 9 on Kelal Yisrael's singular destiny as a chosen nation and its ultimate triumphant redemption (especially according to those commentators – Radak, Metzudat David, and Malbim [in contrast to Rashi and Ibn Ezra] – who perceive this to be the unambiguous theme throughout the haftarah, already conveyed by the initial comparison with Benei Khushiyyim even when Kelal Yisrael is unworthy) may be significant. This thoroughly optimistic posture establishes Amos chapter 9 as an extremely attractive and pleasant alternative to the depressing and disturbing Yechezkel chapter 22, perhaps justifying the breach in accepted halakhic protocol.

Some authorities (Levush, Machatzit Ha-Shekel, O.C. 428) posit that Amos chapter 9's preference as the haftarah for the joined parashiyot of Acharei Mot and Kedoshim is also due to its equal relevance to both parashiyot. Moreover, it is conceivable that the inspiring Amos prophecy about the ultimate redemption and triumph of Kelal Yisrael provides such a crucial counterbalance to the potentially calamitous dangers of the ubiquitous “*to'eivot*” behavior forewarned at the conclusion of Acharei Mot (Vayikra 18:24–30) that it is deemed indispensable. Thus, the contribution of Amos chapter 9 to Acharei Mot outweighs Yechezkel chapter 22's enhancement of Kedoshim. However, neither of these views would sufficiently explain R. Akiva Eiger's conclusion that Amos chapter 9 should supersede Yechezkel chapter 22 and should be read in conjunction with Kedoshim, even in the absence of Acharei Mot.

In any case, while these perspectives may explain the occasional replacement of Yechezkel chapter 22 by Amos chapter 9 as the haftarah for Parashat Kedoshim, they actually deepen the mystery as to why the painful and pessimistic Yechezkel chapter 22 was initially selected as the prime companion to Parashat Kedoshim, particularly considering the plethora of other options. If Chazal felt discomfort or even just ambivalence linking the ambitious

ideal of “*kedoshim tiheyu*” with the bleak depiction and devastating critique of the eroded religious state of Kelal Yisrael reflected in the chapter in Yechezkel, why did they overcome this reticence and select it as the default haftarah of Parashat Kedoshim? Evidently, notwithstanding its severity and unpleasantness, this section in Yechezkel also acutely illuminates some critical dimension of Parashat Kedoshim in a manner that enhances our understanding and appreciation of the themes of that parashah.

To better comprehend the choice of Yechezkel chapter 22 (and possibly the exceptions, as well), we should briefly analyze its content and examine its link with Parashat Kedoshim. Like Parashat Kedoshim, a striking range of diverse infractions, seemingly disconnected from one another, register in this section in Yechezkel. While the list appears to be random, further analysis demonstrates that these prohibitions encompass the full range of human and religious activity. Moreover, in the aggregate, this group of halakhic violations reflects a profound flaw in the holistic religious persona that ideally should be shaped by the ambitious charge of “*kedoshim tiheyu*.” The range and content of violations in Yechezkel bespeak of a pattern of fundamental neglect and even rejection of religious commitment and spiritual focus that is both a consequence and further cause of a narrow view of halakhic obligation that denies the concept of a broader halakhic personality exemplified by the concept of “*kedoshim tiheyu*.”

This perspective and the link to the theme of “*kedoshim tiheyu*” is supported by the authoritative commentators on Yechezkel, as well. Rashi (Yechezkel 22:7) specifically notes that the litany of violations that form the navi's indictment of Kelal Yisrael in this harsh rebuke actually parallels the proscriptions of Parashat Kedoshim. This includes the abuse of parents, insensitivity to converts, exploitation of widows and orphans, disregard or disrespect for kodashim, desecration of the Shabbat, character defamation, various arayot (sexual impropriety) violations, bribery, and ribbit (collection of interest on loans). Rashi (22:5) posits that the unusual phrase “*temei'at Hashem*,” which focuses on the antinomian persona of the transgressor, contrasts sharply with the Torah's aspiration of being an “*am kadosh banim le-Yotzram*” (an idea expressed in Devarim 14:1–2). R. Yosef Kara, the Biblical exegete, expands this insight, arguing (in his comment on Yechezkel 22:5) that “*temei'at Hashem*” expressly contradicts the avowed aim of personal sanctity and, more ambitiously, a sanctified persona, rooted in the imperative of “*ve-hitkadishtem vi-heyitem kedoshim ki*

kadosh ani Hashem” (Vayikra 11:44), reinforcing the link with the primary theme of Parashat Kedoshim. Later in his commentary (Yechezkel 22:12), he too links the violations of this chapter to the prohibitions of Parashat Kedoshim and he explicitly identifies the status of “*temei’at Hashem*” as the antithesis of one who observes and internalizes the mitzvot associated with the parashah and concept of “*kedoshim tiheyu*.” [See, also, Radak’s interesting link (in his commentary on Yechezkel 22:3) between Kedoshim and Yechezkel.]

In light of this analysis, we might reassess some puzzling difficulties posed by Yechezkel chapter 22. While the extensive record of noteworthy transgressions certainly constitute an exceedingly serious breach of halakhic behavior, one might still question the proportionality of the devastating consequences portended by the prophet. Moreover, the ubiquitous references to “*shefikhut damim*” (shedding of blood) seem exaggerated when one considers the identity and character of the crimes that are subsumed under this most severe category of halakhic violation and misconduct. The prophet applies this most brutal appellation also to strong-armed rulers (22:6), gossip mongers (22:9), and solicitors of bribery (22:12). While these transgressions are certainly exceedingly improper, their designation as “*shefikhat damim*” seems incommensurate with the crime, especially given the initial formulation of “*ir ha-damim*” (city of blood), which established the very harsh tone at the outset of this chapter. We have already alluded to the fact that the phrase “*temei’at Hashem*” (22:5) stands out as an unusual characterization.

Yet, precisely these intriguing anomalies and the apparent hyperbole may serve as a clue that further illuminates the link between the concept of “*kedoshim tiheyu*” and this harsh indictment of Kelal Yisarel.

As previously noted, the imperative of “*kedoshim tiheyu*” eschews halakhic narrowness and compartmentalization. “*Kedoshim tiheyu*” forcefully asserts the interaction of different dimensions of halakhic life and the need for consistency and a comprehensive commitment. The cultivation of a sanctified persona that stems from, but also transcends the performance of, individual halakhic norms, regulates the interaction of diverse halakhic spheres, and protects against abuses that can spiral into a systemic erosion of commitment and performance. The parallel of Yechezkel chapter 22 dramatically demonstrates that this ambitious ideal is not merely a noble spiritual aspiration or a supererogatory (“*lifnim mi-shurat ha-din*”) halakhic luxury, but is, in fact, an indispensable perspective on

halakhic life that is neglected at great peril. The concepts of “*mitzvah goreret mitzvah*” (a mitzvah leading to, or causing, another mitzvah to occur) and its negative counterpart (“*aveirah goreret aveirah*” – an aveirah leading to, or causing, another aveirah to occur) highlight the interdependence of halakhic life and the impact of spiritual momentum in the halakhic realm.

When individuals, and especially the nation, refuse to embrace the vision of an enriching destiny of “*mamlekhet kohanim ve-goy kadosh*” anchored in “*kedoshim tiheyu*,” dire consequences may ensue beyond dashed expectations of potential spiritual greatness. Yechezkel chapter 22 catalogues how neglect and abuse of seemingly unrelated spheres of halakhic life spiral into the spiritual equivalent of “*to’eivah*” and “*shefikhut damim*,” producing “*temei’at Hashem*.” The evocative, seemingly exaggerated imagery used by the prophet precisely capture the fragility and interdependence of spiritual life. Thus, while the grim repercussions and graphic depiction of Kelal Yisrael’s crimes and failures are distasteful, this chapter profoundly underscores and projects the vital importance of “*kedoshim tiheyu*,” thus establishing it as the appropriate choice for the haftarah of Parashat Kedoshim.

The Malbim (Yechezkel 22:9) perceives the three references to *shefikhut damim* (22:6, 9, 12) as corresponding to the three vices (*kavod-nesi’im* [v. 6]; *kinah-rakhil* [v. 9]; *ta’avah-shochad* [v. 12]) that drive man from the world (Pirkei Avot). This perspective reinforces the notion that the infractions are not merely independent transgressions, but constitute a pattern of halakhically self-destructive conduct that fundamentally contravenes the principle of halakhic values and the cultivation of a halakhically exemplary character. The equation between these halakhic character themes and *shefikhat damim* in Yechezkel chapter 22 powerfully affirms the vital role of “*kedoshim tiheyu*.”

Why, then, is Yechezkel chapter 22 abandoned when Kedoshim is conjoined with Acharei Mot? Perhaps because the capacity for spiritual erosion and even moral catastrophe due to the momentum of sin, the neglect of halakhic integrity, and the failure to develop a consistent halakhic persona, is already effectively documented precisely in the final verses of Acharei Mot that transition into the theme of “*kedoshim tiheyu*.” As previously alluded to, the Torah in that context (Vayikra 18:24–30) repeatedly (4 times) employs the terminology of “*to’eivah*” to graphically depict the nation’s devastating spiritual decline in consequence of its abandonment of

kedushah and its adoption of the alternative life style of other cultures. The Torah (Vayikra 18:3) warns that the paradigms of “*ma’aseih Eretz Mitzrayim*” and “*ma’aseih Eretz Kena’an*” are not only personally and nationally counterproductive, but also metaphysically afflict or poison the physical-spiritual environment of Eretz Yisrael (18:25, 28). The Torah (Vayikra 18:25, 28) dramatically underscores the transcendence of halakhic life and norms when it records that the inanimate sanctified land of Eretz Yisrael cannot tolerate a lifestyle that is antithetical to the theme of “*kedoshim tiheyu*,” which is articulated in the pesukim beginning Parashat Kedoshim that immediately follow. While the Torah also alludes to and reiterates some of these motifs in the end of Kedoshim itself (20:22–24), this comparatively mild rendition serves to highlight the more graphic and transcendent treatment of Acharei Mot. When Acharei Mot and Kedoshim are read in tandem, the Torah reading itself sufficiently and satisfactorily conveys this vital dimension of the indispensability of “*kedoshim tiheyu*” and the disastrous ramifications of its absence, rendering the unpleasant reading of Yechezkel chapter 22 superfluous. [It is noteworthy that many chumashim erroneously printed the haftarah of Yechezkel chapter 22 in conjunction with Acharei Mot, and linked Amos chapter 9 with Kedoshim. See Machatzit Ha-Shekel, op cit. These pairings are logical, especially as parallels. However, Chazal’s decision may reflect a more ambitious parshanut objective, as we have posited.]

Moreover, the context of Acharei Mot’s forceful rejection of alternative cultures and lifestyles affords an opportunity to effectively accentuate an equally important aspect of the aspiration to internalize kedushah and imitate Hashem. The conjunction of the parashiyot accentuates the fact that this capacity and obligation to pursue kedushah uniquely characterizes Kelal Yisrael and distinguishes them from other nations. As a “*mamlechet kohanim*” and “*goy kadosh*,” the destiny of Kelal Yisrael is always singular; its relationship with Hashem endures even periods of transgression and betrayal; its ultimate redemption is guaranteed, notwithstanding all the travails and vicissitudes in the uneven course of Jewish history. This theme is magnificently captured precisely in the chapter of Amos chapter 9, the choice haftarah for Acharei Mot-Kedoshim, as previously noted. Although this approach fails to explain the ruling of R. Akiva Eiger, it does account for the intriguing ruling of the Mordechai and Rema. Chazal’s complex position regarding the haftarah pairings of Parashat Kedoshim constitutes an

impressive if subtle contribution to the illumination of the pivotal multidimensional theme of “*kedoshim tiheyu*.”