

Acharei-Kedoshim

April 23-24, 2021
Iyar 11-12, 5781.

This week's parsha is Acharei mos- Kedoshim.

In this week's parsha we find the post death of Ahron's sons commandments to the priests.
The parsha is filled with korbanos.

It is understood from the mepharshim that Ahron's sons "got the kiss of God" due to them bringing a "strange fire" on the altar and being inebriated at the time¹. It is possibly a case of "intentions were right, but method was wrong". That is much like the Gemaras in Eruvin, Megilla, and Pesachim etc., where wine is discussed as a method of freeing oneself from burdens, opens the mind, and is the method through which one can achieve simcha (Rashi-stating that simcha comes through wine)².

Furthermore, there is a connection to the adage that is said about Purim (in Megillah 7b), that
אֵינִישׁ לְבַסּוּמִי בְּפוּרָא עַד דְּלֹא יָדַע בֵּין אָרוּר הֵמָּן לְכָרוּךְ מָרְדֳּכַי
אָמַר רַבָּא מִיִּיב

And the connection between wine and secret, and Torah. That when the wine enters, the truth comes out which is connected to 70 (gematria of wine, sod etc.)

The important avoda is (as I wrote on Purim) is to work the whole year that the truth is revealed when you are in a state of inebriation. There is a connection between Sod and Yesod. Sod, secret is like a foundation in that it is hidden, we only know how strong it is, based on the building that is exposed and built on top of it. We do not know how deep the foundation penetrates, or how strong it is, rather through its revealed form. (And Yesod is Sod with 10, which is 80, i.e., the number of verses in the parsha of Acharei.) The gemara in Pesachim talks about taking wine in order to open the mind to the words of the Torah. There is a connection between a controlled state of inebriation such that inhibitions and boundaries are overcome, to achieve greater connection to the knowledge found in Torah.

So Ahron's son's while trying to accomplish some sense of connection to Hashem mistook their role. The Torah tells us they died for it. As it is not enough just to emotionally cleave to Hashem, one also has to work, and act, and for that there are rules.

But the connection to Yom Kippur, is that just like Purim is one day a year, Yom Kippur is one day a year. Now, do we centralize Yom Kippur as the most important day of the year, that is do we fear the ramifications of the day, that is, we devoid ourselves of wrongdoing, out of fear that should we arrive at Yom Kippur, we would be punished for our actions. I would conjecture, most of our day is not spent in fear of Yom Kippur. Therefore, the Avoda during the year is to imbue ourselves with thinking about Hashem and serving Hashem as the Alter Rebbe explains, B'simcha Uvetuv Leivav, not just in fear of the day of Yom Kippur. And when we arrive at Yom Kippur, or a day like Purim the truth, from our accomplishments during the year will be revealed.

The Parsha accomplishes teaching us this lesson by telling us about the Avoda of Yom Kippur. And as the Alter Rebbe in Lekutei Torah in the Mamer קִיבּוּיִם הַנֶּהָרִים יִכְפֹּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטָהֳרָתְכֶם מִכָּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תִּטְהָרוּ:
The double language of "tahor" is part in parcel of us garnering teshuva, in order to connect ourselves to Hashem "ponim el ponim".

Teshuva and Torah are connected. (On High Holidays we day Teshuva Tefila Tzedaka 'remove bad decrees', as well, the world is founded [nee yesod] on the principles of Torah, Avoda and Gemilus Chasadim- which the Alter Rebbe discusses elsewhere in Lekutei Torah in an earlier mamer on the same parsha) It's not enough to live a hermetic life, to devoid ourselves of the possibility of committing sin, rather, we need to work and imbue ourselves with the proper foundations and be oivdei Hashem. It is a balance of contemplative efforts, and active efforts.

These ideas connect, Purim, Yom Kippur, and the reading of this week.

We also read the later passages related to sexual misconduct on Yom Kippur. I want to draw your attention to the wording in the preamble to the commandments.

Pesukim 2-5 Chapter 18

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:
Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: I the LORD am your God.

כַּמַּעֲשָׂה אֲרֻץ־מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכְּתֻם־בָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וְכַמַּעֲשָׂה אֲרֻץ־כְּנָעַן
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְבִיא אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּבְחֻקֵּיהֶם לֹא תִלְכוּ:

¹ We learn laws of inebriation from this. Such that a Kohen is not allowed to perform any of their service while intoxicated, and that we cannot perform certain mitzvos while under the influence.

² Ari Friedman who attended my Thursday night Shiur stated the following: "Zot" zayin aleph tav is 408. Aaron's

sons came into the holy of holy. Mammon kol and tzom are all 136 which adds up to 408 which is zot. Also, mashichim plural is 408 and hodu lahashem ki Tov ki leolam chasdo 408.

You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, or of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you; nor shall you follow their laws.

אַת־משפטי תעשו וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ לִלְכֹּת בָּהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

My rules alone shall you observe, and faithfully follow My laws: I the LORD am your God.

וּשְׁמֹרְתֶם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־משפטי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּם הָאָדָם וְנִי בָהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה:

You shall keep My laws and My rules, by the pursuit of which man shall live: I am the LORD.

Then Posuk 26

וּשְׁמֹרְתֶם אִתְּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־משפטי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ מִכָּל הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הָאֵלֶּה הָאֲזִרָה וְהַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם:

But you must keep My laws and My rules, and you must not do any of those abhorrent things, neither the citizen nor the stranger who resides among you.

Then Posuk 30

וּשְׁמֹרְתֶם אֶת־מִשְׁמְרָתִי לְבִלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת מַחֲזָקוֹת הַתּוֹעֵבֹת אֲשֶׁר נִעֲשׂוּ (לְפָנֵיכֶם וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם)

You shall keep My charge not to engage in any of the abhorrent practices that were carried on before you, and you shall not defile yourselves through them: I the LORD am your God.

First Hashem reminds as the in the following verses the only reason to listen to them is because Hashem said so (verse 2). Then when discussing the other countries abhorrent practices, Hashem calls them Chukim. In the 3 levels of mitzvos (Chukim, Mishpatim, and Eidos) The chukim are the laws least understood. They have no reason (such as Kilaim of Shaatnez, or Red Heifer). Hashem calls the laws of the lands chukim, meaning they are baseless, there is no reason for them. Whereas the laws which I give (posuk 4 and 5) Hashem refers to the other class of mitzvos the ones that “make sense” such as do not steal or murder.

There may be accepted practices around us, that feel right, and that are socially acceptable, but unless the Torah allows it, and within the laws of adaptation of Torah, we interpret, apply, and adapt the laws, according to the central tenets, otherwise it doesn't stand. Furthermore, it is a further enunciation of the rule of Hashem in our lives, as opposed to any other force. (This can be connected to what the Rebbe says about the difference between an idol and a false

god. And idol could be a colloquialism, whereas the problem is when that idol replaces the truth and becomes a god.)

Therefore, what we have to remember is that Hashem gives us the commandments, and the moral guidance, with regard to our rules and laws³. The laws of the land that we have to listen to though, when conflicting with moral laws of the Torah, we ought not necessarily follow, and we have to remember it still all comes from Hashem.

The beginning of Parshas Kedoshim, we see (according to the Mefharshim) that the 10 commandments are somewhat repeated in the early pesukim of the Parsha. The posuk end in verse 14 of chapter 19, that “v’yoresa M’elokecha, Ani Hashem”. This means and you shall fear Hashem, I am Hashem. A reason why this is the expression, is due to the fact that what is being asked of us qualitative, not a quantitative mitzvah. For example, putting a stumbling block in front of a blind person, quantitatively and literally, would mean one thing, but not putting a stumbling block in front of a blind person can also mean, don't deceive someone who is “blind” to information you may have. Therefore, these commandments are like “behind closed ‘doors’ types” where it is between you and Hashem, not between you and someone knowing what you know. Therefore, one ought to abide by them with Yirah.

Then the next pesukim in chapter 19 provide further qualitative types of commandments, and how do the topics end (verse 18) with loving your fellow as yourself. Meaning it is a level of Ahava. In avodas Hashem, we have to have both Ahava and Yirah. These are found in the pesukim, and how to do these mitzvos (among the others). Further, it is easier to understand fear, such as fearing a King, such as Hashem and it is easy to comprehend love between humans, that ought to also be applied to loving Hashem. Both are key in Avoda. Both are required in seeking and living with Hashem.

My final thought is about Ahvas Yisroel. In posuk 17 it says you shall surely rebuke your friend, double language which the Rebbe explained is that one has to rebuke (i.e., perfect) themselves before rebuking their friend, and furthermore, they must also rebuke in the way that leads to Ahvas Yisroel, and in the name of Hashem and not Chas Vishalom anything else.

Good Shabbos!

³ And within these rules and laws, there are rules to have derech eretz, and follow the laws of the land where you live, but it would seem, up to a limit.