

Parshas Kedoshim

This week's Parsha, Kedoshim, holds a significant place in our spiritual journey as it reiterates how the Jewish people are distinguished by a unique set of positive and negative commandments. It's worth noting that we recently celebrated Rosh Chodesh Iyar, spelled with the letters Aleph Yud Yud Raish, which symbolizes "Ani Hashem Rofecha." I am Hashem, your healer. Interestingly, from Melachim, we know that Shlomo Hamelech initiated the construction of the Beis Hamikdash, and this endeavour was continued in Ezra with the second Beis Hamikdash.

In the Parsha, Perek 19:32, you are required to give respect to elders. The Gemara in Kiddushin 32b (same Daf and Posuk- also Lev i.e. numerical value 32), That you may think if you close your eyes, to ignore your obligation to serve the elder, the Gemara says, the posuk concludes with and you shall fear Hashem. That Hashem knows our true intentions. This means that the holiness taught in the Parsha isn't only about physical and visual actions; it is also what is in our hearts that counts.

The commandment to respect our elders and the Gemara discussing that one must not think they can look away from their obligation, and Hashem knows the truth, is fundamental to the general approach to being a Jew. In chapter 32 of Tanya, the Alter Rebbe, which is the Lev of Tanya, explains that a Jew's obligation to love their fellow is paramount. The Alter Rebbe says that we are all called brothers because we have our Father in Heaven, whom we respect. The Alter Rebbe

explains that to love your fellow like yourself because self-love is innate. So the Gemara and the Torah are telling us that society functions on respect afforded to those older than us as a precursor to the work required by a Jew, as stated by Tanya, on how to love your neighbour best.

The Torah gives us the general principle that we must respect elders. The Gemara elaborates further that we cannot close our eyes to that opportunity, and the Alter Rebbe furthers that this love and respect are fundamental interpersonally among Jews. I believe this is borne from the idea that in society, respect is given to one another, even if you think you "close your eyes" and ignore this. Just as one cannot overlook their obligation of respect, a commandment from the Torah, we can also learn the same obligation about loving one fellow as they love themselves.

All these interpersonal relationships also reflect our service to Hashem. If people can learn to respect their neighbours and love them as they do themselves, they also model how one must serve Hashem. Furthermore, the humility one has by respecting and loving one's neighbours is critical to truly being able to serve Hashem. If one has no room for others in their life, they have little room for Hashem.

So while this posuk 32 about respect seems disconnected from a general principle, it is no coincidence that the Gemara chapter 32 and Tanya chapter 32 discuss a similar vein, that the genuinely functioning person, and servant of Hashem, has respect for their neighbours.

In this way, let us hope “Any Hashem Rofecha” is revealed, and we should begin rebuilding the third Beis Hamikdash, just as the first two Beis Hamikdash were started in Iyar.

Good Shabbos.