



Wembley Synagogue

קדושים

Insights from the commentators into the Sedra of Kedoshim 5768

What's the Sidra about?

1st Aliya: The beginning of Kedoshim states that, holiness is realised through keeping Shabbat, being in awe of one's father and mother, and the prohibition against idol worship. Laws of charity, honesty, and the paying of wages on time are also stated.

2nd and 3rd Aliyot: Showing deference in the administration of justice is forbidden. We have the responsibility to "properly reprimand" each other. The prohibition against wearing any mixture of wool and linen, cutting sideburns, tattooing and the use of mediums or the occult are stated.

4th and 5th Aliyot: Proper and equal treatment for the Ger-convert, honesty in business, and the prohibition against worshipping the Molech are stated.

5th, 6th, and 7th Aliyot: Remainder of Kedoshim states the specific punishments that Bet Din would administer for the fifteen prohibited relationships listed at the end of Acharei Mot.

(Source: Rav Aron Tendler)

וּבְקַצְרְכֶם אֶת־קְצִיר אֲדָמְכֶם לֹא תִבְלֶה פְּאַת שְׂדֶךְ לְקַצֹּר לְקַיֵּם קְצִירָהּ לֹא תִלְקֹט - When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not complete the reaping to the corner of your field. (19:9)

The Torah enjoins the field owner not to reap the entire field, but to leave over a small corner of the field for the poor. Why is this? Would it not be easier to simply reap the entire field and give the poor a bag of grain? This way, the poor man would not have to go to the field and do the actual harvesting himself. The Alshich HaKadosh offers a cogent insight that should encourage us to raise our sensitivity level to the needs and feelings of others. By leaving over a corner of the field for the poor, the owner is implying, "This is your part of the field. It belongs to you." The poor man no longer feels like a beggar. He is an owner, albeit of a very small tract of land, but an owner nonetheless. This is the Torah's way of granting some entitlement to the poor man. This is why the Torah prefaces the mitzvah of פְּאַה - leaving over a corner of the field, with the words, "When you reap the harvest of your land." The Torah is telling the owner, "Look and understand. Hashem grants you land and He blesses it with an abundant crop. This may seem to be a natural occurrence, but it is not. Nothing is natural. It is all based upon Hashem's will. Why does He conceal His part of the relationship? Because He wants you to feel like an owner, as if it were your work that caused this abundant harvest. Just as Hashem cares about your feelings of ownership, so, too, should you be sensitive to the emotions of the poor. Let them also feel like an owner." (Source: Peninim on the Torah)

לֹא תִקְלֹל חֵרֵשׁ - You shall not curse the deaf. (19:14)

The Torah focuses on the individual who cannot hear, and thus, cannot be embarrassed by the curse. The fact that the Torah chooses to focus on a deaf person, rather than anyone else, is noteworthy. After all, the prohibition against cursing applies in all cases. One is not permitted to curse his fellow - regardless of that fellow's ability to hear. In his Derashot, the Ran posits that the Torah is teaching us a powerful lesson. If we were to ask ourselves why it is prohibited to steal, the answer would be: We are not allowed to take something that is not ours. One may not violate the property rights of another person. What is his - is his, and, by implication, off limits to me. The Torah ostensibly seeks to protect the victim. Applying this thesis, the reason one is not to curse his fellow is because one may not harm his fellow. Cursing is a form of inflicting damage. When the individual hears the curse, he becomes hurt, humiliated and depressed. If this would be the case, it would, by implication, be permitted to curse a deaf person, since he is not sustaining an injury. He is unaware of the curse, and thus, not victimized by it. On the contrary, it is beneficial for the one who did the cursing. He is now calmer; his

anger has been dissipated by releasing his tirade against the unfortunate man. Therefore, why is it forbidden to curse a person who does not hear what we are saying? If there is no victim, then there should be no prohibition. From the fact that the Torah prohibits cursing a deaf person, we derive that we have confused the victims. The victim in this case is not the deaf person, but, rather, the one who is cursing. He is blemishing his soul and destroying himself with the revenge he is taking against the deaf person. In addition, this implies that the prohibition against stealing is not necessarily only protecting the individual from whom he has stolen, but also protecting the thief himself. The Torah is sensitive to the harm one causes to himself, as well. Our Torah's dictates are unlike any other volume of jurisprudence. It is concerned not only with the obvious victim, but even with the one who is perpetrating the act, because he is also a victim - of himself. (Hebrew Academy Parsha Sheet 5760)

לֹא־תִשְׂנֵא אֶת־אָחִיךָ בְּלִבְךָ הוֹכֵחַ תּוֹכֵחַ אֶת־עַמִּיתְךָ וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חַטָּא -You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall reprove your fellow and do not bear a sin because of [literally: 'on'] him. (19:17)

Ramban explains: If someone has wronged you, do not hate him in your heart. Rather, rebuke him. Ask him why he acted as he did and let him explain himself. If you do that, you will not hold his sin against him. (Commentary to Vayikra 19:17) R' Elazar Kalir z"l writes: The hatred which results when a person has been slighted and lets his anger fester, rather than talking it over with the offender, is what is meant by שְׂנֵאת חַטָּא "needless hatred." Chazal teach us that this type of antagonism is what destroyed the second Bet Hamikdash.

לֹא־תִשְׂנֵא אֶת־אָחִיךָ בְּלִבְךָ הוֹכֵחַ תּוֹכֵחַ אֶת־עַמִּיתְךָ וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חַטָּא You shall reprove your fellow and do not bear a sin because of him. (19:17) Rav Gedalia Schorr, zl, quotes the Bialostoker Magid, zl, who explains that there are two methods for reproach. One method emphasises the positive by lifting up the sinner and asking him how a person such as he could act so reprehensibly. In this sense, he is not denigrating the person for what he is. Rather, he is pointing out to him how he has fallen short of his potential. The other manner of rebuke is to question how he could have had the audacity to sin before G-d. What gave him the right to rebel against the Almighty? The Torah responds to this form of reproof, insisting, "Do not bear a sin because of him." The word "tisah," which is translated as "bear," is related to the word "naso" which means to raise up. In this light, the pasuk has an alternative meaning, "Do not raise up his sin - do not magnify his sin more than it is." Rather than expanding the sin, focus on the sinner. Focus on the positive aspect of who he is, what he could accomplish, and what he is discarding by virtue of his sinful behavior: a person like you can do better than this form of behavior. Do not belittle yourself by acting in a demeaning manner. This is the Torah's concept of rebuke.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, zl, adds another dimension to every Jew's responsibility for his fellow: not to turn away apathetically from our friend's transgression. He says that the mitzvah of tochachah, rebuke, is especially applicable before one sins - even while he is acting virtuously. If one begins to note a change, however minute, he should immediately react by bringing it to his friend's attention. Furthermore, it is important to "give mussar," lecture one another on the subject of ethics and character refinement in order to strengthen our resolve to act piously and to observe Hashem's mitzvot. Why wait until one sins? This is the Torah's hidden message: reprove your fellow while he is still observant and acting appropriately, so that he will not begin to sin. By reproofing him early, we try to ensure that he will not transgress.

שבת שלום!

Shabbat Shalom!



Shabbat starts 8.11pm



Shabbat ends: 9.21pm

לע"נ ר' מרדכי צבי ב"ר חיאל משה וולפסון ז"ל

The *Insights into the Sedra* sheet is edited by Chazan Anthony Wolfson

Online at: http://www.wembleysynagogue.org/html/sedra_notes.html