



# Ashreinu | אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

## SHATNEZ AND FRIENDSHIPS

RABBI JOSH GRAJOWER

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This week's parsha contains possibly the most famous one-liner in the entire Torah, "ואהבת לרעך כמוך", "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (19:18)

Commentators

and casual readers alike wonder: how can we achieve peace and attain the goal of loving our neighbors? How can we reduce strife and jealousy and increase love and friendship?

I would like to suggest that Hashem has already hinted to the answer in the very next pasuk. Immediately following the command to love our neighbors, Hashem commands us against mix-breeding animals, plants, or clothing. The Ramban and Sefer HaChinuch

both suggest that the root of this prohibition is to prevent us from trying to change the world that God created. Everything God created has a unique purpose. Man should not try and outsmart God by mix-breeding different species. Man should embrace, appreciate, and accept the world God has created.

This idea is true regarding people as well. Hashem created each person with a unique mission. We must remember that every person in this world has a unique, God-given mission; each unique human being is someone to appreciate and accept. Internalizing the message of mix-breeding helps us not be jealous or spiteful; instead we are drawn to love the Godliness of everyone. God connects these two commandments to remind us of the holiness with which He created each and every one of the species on this earth – first and foremost mankind! If we remember this lesson, we will certainly have a greater chance of fulfilling the commandment of "ואהבת לרעך כמוך".

# IN LAW AND IN SPIRIT

ELI LITWIN ('18)

THE RAMBAN (19:2) IN HIS INTERPRETATION of “קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ” conveys an important message and lesson for the Jewish people.

The Ramban states that “קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ”- “you shall be holy,” actually means “פְּרוּשִׁים מִן”- “separate yourself from those things that are permissible.” Even the performance of actions that are permissible, such as overindulgence in eating and drinking or using foul language, when one is technically not committing a sin, can make a person a “נבל ברשות התורה”- “a despicable character with the Torah’s permission.”

The Torah, therefore, establishes a general principle of “קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ” defining holiness by one’s ability to refrain from indulging in excess.

Interestingly, the mitzvah of “קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ” is not included in the 613 mitzvot. The Rambam in his Sefer Hamitzvot (Shores 4) states that there are certain mitzvot like “קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ” that are “ציוויים הכלליים”- “super mitzvot” that encompass many other mitzvot.” These mitzvot are not counted as, positive commandments, because of their great inclusiveness; they are superimposed on many mitzvot.

The Ramban cites a further example in order to prevent one from becoming despicable, נבל ברשות התורה. After the the Torah discusses the laws of monetary dealings with his fellow man, the Torah sets down a general principle: “וַעֲשִׂיתָ הַיָּשָׁר וְהַטּוֹב”- “you shall do what is fair and good in the eyes of Hashem” (Devarim 6:18). One should deal generously with his fellow man and not assert the full extent of one’s rights.

The third example that the Ramban cites is regarding Shabbat. The Torah first prohibits the vari-

ous types of melacha, work, and then adds a general positive commandment “תִּשְׁבֹּת”- “rest”. Activities that do not fall under the 39 categories of melacha, but are not in the spirit of Shabbat, should not be done. The נבל, despicable person, tampers with the letter of the law and does not live with the spirit of the law. Therefore, the purpose for the general positive commandments that the Torah lays down is so that Jews should abide and live by them not only within the letter of the law, but within the spirit of the law.

## STATE OF HOLINESS

LEORA KROLL ('17)

“קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ, אֲנִי יְקוֹק אֱלֹהִים” (19:2)

What is holiness? How does one become holy?

RASHI AND RAMBAM GIVE THE FAMOUS ANSWER THAT CONNECTS this pasuk to the rest of the parsha. Attaining holiness refers to separating from arayot: resisting animalistic instincts and remaining in pure relationships.

The Ramban, however, disagrees; Ramban views this as an entirely separate mitzvah obligating one to distance himself even from things that are permitted to him.

To the Ramban, holiness is a state of being. It is a state of dissecting and evaluating your day to remove that which is forbidden, even being critical of those things you do that are fully permitted. It’s not all about the letter of the law, but the spirit of the law as well. The Ramban is essentially defining a mitzvah of seeking out spiritual growth. Kedusha means being different than the rest of the world, which seeks quick fixes, the fulfillment of pleasures and trivial happiness.

Instead, we seek out kedusha; we seek out opportunities for growth, getting closer to God, and understanding ourselves and our place in the world.

It is not enough to simply keep all the mitzvot; we must seek out opportunities for growth in everything we do. Every challenge we encounter each day is a vehicle for growth somehow, whether it appears in the form of a new opportunity or a chance to defeat our yetzer hara and reassess our goals. We must sanctify our days. We cannot live them like everyone else.

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## JUST LIKE YOU

NETANYA MEYEROWITZ ('17)

IN PARSHAT KEDOSHIM, HASHEM COMMANDS THE JEWISH people, “You shall be holy” and then explains different ways which allow us to achieve that goal.

Some of these different holy actions include, “You shall not hate your neighbor in your heart” and “You shall surely rebuke your neighbor.” However, one of the more striking commandments is “ואהבת לרעך כמוך” -- “You shall love your fellow as yourself” (19:18).

The word “כָּמוֹךְ”, or “yourself”, seems unnecessary. Is it not enough to just say, “You shall love your fellow?”

It is easy to feel a sense of love for people whose attributes and accomplishments are lesser than or similar to oneself. However, once a person notices someone else’s great talent or amazing attributes, it is easy for him to feel a sense of jealousy, which can lead to competition and make it harder to love that person.

The Chafetz Chaim once went to a bar mitzvah; after many rabbis spoke at the party, the Chafetz Chaim was asked to speak as well. However, he declined the offer.

When he was asked why he declined the offer to speak at the bar mitzvah, the Chofetz Chaim answered that if his speech had not been as good as the others, it would have been given for no purpose; if his speech was better than the other rabbis’ speeches, it might have embarrassed them.

The Chafetz Chaim did not want to create any unnecessary competition based on people’s greatness in different areas.

Perhaps this is why the Torah uses the word “כָּמוֹךְ”, or “yourself”. If you can learn to love yourself despite all of the flaws he or she has, if one can learn to embrace his or her talents, one can learn to love his or her fellow Jew, even if his or her fellow Jew is “greater” in certain aspects.

Therefore, the usage of the word “כָּמוֹךְ”, or “yourself”, is there to imply that a person should not compare his or her own greatness to others; rather, one should love his or her fellow Jew, regardless if the other is better in certain areas.

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## HOW TO LOVE

AYALA BROIDE ('17)

ONE OF THE MANY LESSONS OF PARSHAT KEDOSHIM IS TO LOVE; Hashem instructs Bnei Yisrael, “love others as yourself” (19:18). This is one of the most famous phrases in the Torah, but is it truly possible to follow this command? Is it possible to love and care for a complete stranger as much as we love ourselves?

One interpretation is that this phrase simply means that we must wish good unto others and treat others with respect. The Baal Shem Tov tells us that if we see other people as children of Hashem, we will feel a deeper love and connection towards them.

Studies have shown that when a mother goes through the pain of watching her child suffer, the neurons in her brain light up to reflect the areas of her child's suffering. The pain a mother feels when her child is suffering, and inversely, the joy a mother feels when her child is happy, are special emotions and illustrate the important bond between mother and child. So too, if we look at our fellow Jews as children of Hashem, we too can truly feel love and feel connected.

It is easy to apply this idea to our relationships with the people closest to us, but how can one apply this to relationships with complete strangers?

The Alter Rebbe tells us to see beyond physical constrictions of the body and view another person as a soul. He goes on to say that there is no "I" and "you". Every person contributes to one essence, just as both hands are part of one body.

This commandment is the basis of the entire Torah! Why? Because if we can see our existence as not just a physical reality, but as an expression of Godliness, we will be fulfilling Hashem's desire.

Just as we accept and love ourselves despite our mistakes and failures, we must learn to love others despite their shortcomings. Once we do this we will be as one entity.



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