

Parshas Acharei Mos – Kedoshim – Mark Garfield *(reprint)*

י"ג אייר תשע"ה – 1 May 2015 – שבת פי' אחרי - קדושים

As this week's two Parshas are jam-packed with highly relevant information, it was an extremely difficult task choosing a topic. I have, however, decided to focus on respect for our Gedolim and Zekainim, as this has become increasingly relevant in today's society.

The Torah states, 'You should rise in the presence of an elderly individual and you should honour the presence of a sage, and fear Hashem your G-d' (Vayikro 19:32). Rashi (based on Kiddushin 32b) immediately points out that this only refers to a righteous man i.e. one who has acquired wisdom. He explains that the honour due to a sage means that we should not sit in his place, nor contradict his words. This is similar to the respect we must show to our parents.

The Ramban, explaining the Gemoro further, says that it is appropriate to honour any 'older person', whether they are learned or not and we must show respect to a sage whatever his age.

Rav Shimshon Refoel Hirsch, focusing on the final three words of the posuk, demonstrates that the honour due to our Rabbis is of utmost importance to Hashem. They however, must not demand and crave such honour. I recall that the current Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva gave a shmues to the bochurim, in which he instructed them to rise only once a day in his presence (not that he wanted that honour, rather the halocho requires it).

These days the youthful society in general no longer respect their elders and tend not to obey them. In years gone by even those from the coarsest families showed their Rabbis the honour they deserved. Rav Chaim Shmulevitz in his wonderfully eloquent work, Sichos Mussar brings a Midrash in which Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai illustrates how our sages will once again be respected in the future, 'Even in the future, the Holy One Blessed be He will accord honour to the elders' (Vayikro Rabbah 11:8).

Society is decadent, yet it is our duty to be a light unto the nations and illuminate the way.

Please note: We are always looking for volunteers to write a sedra sheet. If you have an important occasion you would like to commemorate, or just have an interesting Dvar Torah you would like to share, please contact Avi Friedwald or Elliott Della to book your sedra. Alternatively – visit the shul sedra sheet and sign up on the online sign up form.
