



## PARSHAS ACHAREI-MOS KEDOSHIM - MR MARK GARFIELD

To be sure, there is so much to choose from in this week's two Parshiyos. So how does one make that choice? We are all quite familiar with several parts of Acharei Mos as they form either the reading for Yom Kippur or describe parts of the Avodo. Kedoshim is replete with ethical sayings and laws, several of which slip off the tongue as a matter of course.

Bearing all this in mind, I have decided to tackle Kedusha - Holiness, an abstract concept if ever there was one.

Hashem speaks to Moshe, telling him to explain to Bnei Yisroel that they should be holy, thus reflecting one of the many Divine characteristics. Rashi immediately explains this to mean separating from forbidden unions and sin, because wherever one finds boundaries prohibiting immoral actions, holiness is close by.

The Gemoro in Avodo Zoro (20b) lists several stages leading to moral perfection. The first of these is Watchfulness, gradually ascending to Holiness through a series of ethical steps. Rabbi Moshe Chayim Luzzato (18th Century) in his classic Mesillas Yeshorim describes the mechanisms whereby one can attain a close union with Hashem. He explains (Chapter 26, Middas Kedusha) that holiness is two-fold - its beginning - effort and its end - a gift.

The Gemoro (Yoma 39a) states that if one sanctifies himself a little he is sanctified a great deal; if he sanctifies himself from below, he is sanctified from above. The Mesillas Yeshorim continues to say that holiness can be acquired through solitude and separation. I would like to suggest that this could refer to Tefillo in that we have an opportunity to separate ourselves from the outside world for certain periods during the day and focus only on Hashem (obviously the ideal is to focus on Hashem 24/7 and that must be our ultimate goal). That which detracts from holiness is a lack of understanding and associating too much with people. This is not to say we shouldn't socialise or interact with others, rather, when engaged in avodas Hashem our entire focus should be on that alone.

Rabbi Shimshon Refoel Hirsch asks why should we be holy? It is because Hashem Himself is holy. The holiness to which we are to strive with all the force of our moral freewill, is in its true absolute purity, an attribute of G-d Himself. The same G-d who gives us this ability for holiness is the One who directs all our deeds.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Dorash Moshe) states the obvious, that an individual can only be holy if he is educated in the way of the Torah. To become a talmid chochom one needs to perfect his very nature. Before detailing the punishments the Torah says 'kedoshim tiheyu' - perfect your ways by improving yourselves. However, even one who has attained levels of holiness still has the potential to sin. An example of this is desiring to bring korbonos outside the Bais Hamikdosh to achieve perfection and to become close to Hashem. Although the intention is positive it is nevertheless prohibited.

As we approach Pesach Sheini let us contemplate what it must have been like to ascend to Yerushalayim with perfect intentions to achieve holiness. This was a second opportunity for those who were unable to fulfil the original mitzvo of Korban Pesach. Nowadays we do not, unfortunately, have the Bais Hamikdosh to perform any sort of Avodo. However, Hashem keeps affording us opportunity after opportunity to achieve our potential. The question is: do we grasp the nettle or let it slip by?

This D'var Torah is in memory of my grandmother, Moras Nasha bas R'Mordechai, who passed away recently.