

LIVING WITH THE PARSHAH 5779

PARSHAS KEDOSHIM

By HARAV YAAKOV FEITMAN

KEHILLAS BAIS YEHUDAH TZVI

There is a well known disagreement between Rashi and the Ramban about the opening words of our Parshah. Rashi is of the opinion that in order to be holy we must separate ourselves from sin and major prohibitions. However, the Ramban holds that this will not make us holy. Avoiding sin will only keep us out of major trouble but does not particularly add kedushah. That comes from sanctifying and uplifting all the mundane things we do, such as eating, sleeping, working and in general investing all of life with spiritual meaning. The Sefer Yagdil Torah cites an interesting quote which might reconcile these two views so that they don't really disagree: "Some people fulfill the *commandments* of the Torah; others fulfill the *will* of the Torah." Rashi seems to focus upon the former and the Ramban the latter. However, we could also suggest that, like life itself, becoming holy is a process. First we must actually, as Rashi urges us, virtually run away from anything sinful. Eventually, as we embrace mitzvos and reject things which are forbidden, we begin to approach the next stage which being *mekadesh* – consecrating – everything we do. The Bais Yisrael (5710) suggests this approach as well, adding that it is easier initially to avoid the most egregious sins and only then to strive for a higher life style as well.

Since we have the zchus to be celebrating the Bar Mitzvah of our dear grandson Yehudah Aryeh this Shabbos, we might add that this idea may explain the seemingly strange process of becoming a man. First a person lives with his (or her) Yetzer Hara – evil inclination – for almost thirteen years and only then is granted the Yetzer Tov – the good inclination – which will help him avoid evil. Is this fair to a child? Why doesn't he get an equal chance to be virtuous from the very beginning? Rav Dessler zt"l suggests it is actually fair for the Yetzer Hara to get a head start since his presentation is empty and vapid in any case. The Michtav M'Eliyau gives the example of two salesmen. One is selling a wonderful product; the other is peddling a piece of junk. Which one requires the better advertising? Which one must have a greater budget for P.R.? The answer to both questions is obviously that the merchant pushing a substandard product must compensate with smoke and mirrors, lies and jingles, enticing commercials. The same is true of our early lives. A child arrives in this world pure and innocent. Unlike those who believe in original sin, we believe in original virtue. We were created in the image of Hashem; thus we gravitate naturally toward kedushah. Therefore, in the beginning we do not even need the Yetzer Tov, for we still radiate the kedushah of heaven from where we just came. It is only later – the teenage years – when the evils of the world begin to encroach that we need the hatzalah of the Yetzer Tov.

This may be why Rashi teaches us that this Parshah was given to the multitudes of Klal Yisrael together, since the whole Torah depends upon it. We spend our entire life avoiding evil and embracing goodness. Sometimes we win; sometimes we lose, but we always have the ability to begin again. Each small battle won brings us closer to total victory. As Rav Nachman wrote and we sing, "the main thing is not to give up" and to keep waging the war. Eventually good triumphs over evil and even the Yetzer Hara yields to his better. May we always strive to be Kedoshim in all that we do.

A GUTTEN SHABBOS

HALACHA OF THE WEEK 5779

PARSHAS KEDOSHIM

BY HARAV YAAKOV FEITMAN, KEHILLAS BAIS YEHUDAH TZVI

We continue this week with questions and answers about Sefiras Haomer.

We discussed some of these issues in our shiur between Mincha and Maariv during the week

Question: May a woman have her sheitel cut during Sefirah? Also, in general, may one make a *Shehechyanu* on a new garment or fruit during Sefirah or should it be avoided?

Answer: Many people make the juxtaposition between the Three Weeks during the summer and the days of Sefirah. Many Poskim (see, for instance Rav Ovadiah Yosef zt"l, Yabia Omer 3:26) claim that this is simply a mistake, since we are much more lenient about Sefirah than the Three Weeks. They give the reason for this distinction as the fact that we are still suffering from the loss of the Bais Hamikdash since we cannot offer korbanos etc. However, the Torah has been restored boruch Hashem, although obviously not on the same level as the time of Rebbe Akiva and so the level of mourning is not as great (Levushei Mordechai 4:153:2).

Nevertheless, there *are* some Poskim (Likutei Maharich, Sodei Raza) that *do* hold that one should avoid making a *Shehechyanu* during Sefirah. Therefore, one should follow the Mishnah Berurah (493:2) that if a *Shehechyanu* “comes up” such as one is sent a new fruit or truly requires a new garment for an upcoming simcha, it is permissible. Regarding cutting a sheitel, there is no problem whatsoever since in any case there would be no *Shehechyanu*. However, if buying a new item can be delayed until after Sefirah is over, it is certainly preferable.

Question: On a similar subject, may one take music lessons or practice playing an instrument during Sefirah?

Answer: The Biur Halachah (551:2) rules that during the Three Weeks a professional musician may play his instrument for payment. It seems that if not for the *parnasah* aspect, it would be forbidden to play. However, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (Igros Moshe 3:87) makes clear that the reason that a professional may play is that for him it is not simcha, but a job. One could therefore extrapolate from his words that learning and practicing an instrument is “work,” not joy. Indeed, the Shearim Hametzuyanim B’Halachah (122:2) rules this way, since the person playing the instrument is not in a tavern or place designated for pleasure. The Telzer Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Eliyahu Meir Bloch zt"l has been quoted (Kobetz Noam 11:195; Moadei Yeshurun, page 128) as ruling the same way. This Halacha applies also to those who wish to exercise to music, which is permissible because it is not for simchah (see Moadei Yeshurun, page 128 in the name of Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l).

Question: May one attend and dance at a wedding which is at a time when the he himself would not be permitted to get married?

Answer: This is subject to a major disagreement. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (Igros Moshe Orach Chaim 2:95) rules that one is permitted because although he is conducting himself as an aveil at that time, the only wedding-related prohibition for him is actually getting married, not *attending* a wedding. Therefore he may attend and even dance. However, he should not shave or take a haircut unless he would not attend without shaving out of embarrassment. However, Rav Y.Y. Weiss (Minchas Yitzchok 4:84) and Rav Wozner (Kobetz M’Bais Levi page 56) do not allow it. The general rule in these disagreements is that we in the United States follow Rav Moshe Feinstein, while Eretz Yisrael follows the Poskim there.

A GUTTEN SHABBOS