



To Purify and Sanctify

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

Parshas Acharei Mos begins with the detailed description of the *korbanos* offered on *Yom Kippur* and concludes with the list of prohibited relationships that are categorized as *gilui arayos*. Although there doesn't appear to be any connection between these two sets of *halachos*, the *krias haTorah* on *Yom Kippur* seems to indicate that they are in fact related. We read the beginning of *Acharei Mos* on *Yom Kippur* morning, and at *Mincha* we read the end of the *parsha*, seemingly continuing where we left off earlier in the day. Is it just coincidental that the two *krias* come from the same *parsha*, or is there a real connection between the beginning of *Parshas Acharei Mos* and its conclusion?

The two principles that are at the root of both the *avodas Yom HaKippurim* as well as the prohibitions of *gilui arayos* are *kedusha* (holiness) and *tahara* (purity). The *avoda* is performed in the *Kodesh HaKadashim*, the holiest place in the world, by the *Kohein Gadol*, the holiest member of the Jewish People, who attains the highest possible level of *kedusha*. Because this *kedusha* cannot be reached in the state of *tumah* (impurity), the *Kohein Gadol* first brings a *korban* to atone for any sin involving defilement of the *Beis Hamikdash* through impurity (*Vayikra* 16:16). The two stated goals of sprinkling the blood of this atoning *korban* on the *mizbeach*, "to purify it and to make it holy", articulate the goals of the entire *avoda*.

Holiness and purity are also the basis for the prohibitions of *gilui arayos*. The *mitzvah* of "*Kedoshim tihyu* - you should be holy" (*Vayikra* 19:2) is understood by Rashi as referring specifically to *gilui arayos*. Furthermore, the term "*tumah*" appears six times in the closing seven *pesukim* of *Acharei Mos* which give a final charge to not defile ourselves and *Eretz Yisroel* through *gilui arayos*.

The terms holiness and purity are the basis for the relationship of a permissible marriage, the antithesis of *gilui arayos*. Marriage itself is referred to as *kiddushin*. Jewish marriage is governed by the *halachos of taharas hamishpacha* which preserve the purity of this holy relationship. The ultimate breach of this purity - the sin of the woman who is a *sotah* - is referred to as an act of *tuma* (*Bamidbar* 5:13).

The source of all holiness in the world is Hashem. *Parshas Kedoshim* begins with this theme - "Be holy because I am holy" (*Vayikra* 19:2) - and ends with "you should be holy for me because I, Hashem, am holy" (*Vayikra* 20:26). Hashem's role as the exclusive source of *kedusha* is also manifest in the *halachic* distinctions made between *tashmischei kedusha* and *tashmischei mitzvah*. Unlike *tashmischei mitzvah* (objects used for *mitzvos* but lack *kedusha*, such as *lulav* and *tzitzis*), *Tashmischei kedusha* (items endowed with holiness - such as *sifrei Torah*, *tefillin*, and *mezuzos*) cannot be discarded but rather must be buried. What distinguishes the objects that are elevated to the status of *tashmischei kedusha*? All *tashmischei kedusha* have the name of Hashem written in them, and thus are holy because Hashem's name is holy. *Tashmischei mitzva* do not have Hashem's name and as such have no inherent sanctity. Further, the ultimate object of holiness is the *Beis Hamikdash* which has within it the presence of Hashem, not merely His name.

As stated earlier, *tumah* must be removed to enable *kedusha* to be present. *Tahara* must therefore be preserved in the *Beis Hamikdash*, when eating *korbanos*, etc. Similarly, the *kedusha* of the relationship between husband and wife must also be maintained through *tahara*. *Gilui arayos* and non-observance of *taharas hamishpacha* are the antitheses of that *kedusha*. Just as the *kedusha* and required *tahara* of the *Beis Hamikdash* emanate from the presence of Hashem, so too does the *kedusha* of marriage stem from Hashem. Where do we find Hashem in the context of a marriage? *Chazal* in *Meseches Kiddushim* observe that the *mitzvah* of honoring ones parents is comparable to honoring Hashem, as there are three partners in the creation of man - Hashem, a father and a mother. Hashem's presence thus manifests itself through marriage. For the *kedusha* of Hashem's presence to be part of a marriage, proper *tahara* must be maintained.

Kedusha and *tahara* of both the *Beis Hamikdash* and the relationship between a man and a woman cannot be taken lightly. There is a special *mitzvah* of *shmiras hamikdash* - guarding the *Beis Hamikdash* to prevent its defilement. We cannot risk impurity which would contradict *kedusha*, we are required to safeguard that which is holy. The *shmiras hamikdash* is reminiscent of the fences placed around *Har Sinai* lest the holiness manifest by Hashem's presence there be defiled. Similarly, the *kedusha* of Hashem's presence in marriage cannot be taken lightly. Before listing the specific *arayos* the Torah commands us "do not come close to violating *gilui arayos* (*Vayikra* 18:6)." The Rambam interprets this to refer to the Torah prohibition of any physical contact between a man and a woman who is prohibited to him. We thus see that the Torah itself enacts a fence around the prohibition of *gilui arayos*. Following the prohibitions of *gilui arayos*, the Torah commands us to "safeguard the charges of Hashem" (*Vayikra* 18:30). *Chazal* interpret this as referring to the obligation to enact rabbinic prohibitions distancing us from actual *gilui arayos*.

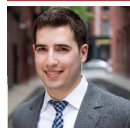
Hashem's presence must be guarded by us with the utmost care. *Kedushas Hamikdash* and the *kedusha* of marriage must be maintained by adhering to the highest standards of *tahara*. Proper precautions in these realms will enable us to be blessed by Hashem's presence in the *Beis Hamikdash* and in our homes.



Zeevyah Benoff
Sales Associate
NIAA CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE
SALES AWARD - 2015
C: 201.956.0208
O: 201.992.3600
Zeevyah@LinksNJ.com



Stuart Greenbaum
Mortgage Banker NMLS# 279221
Mortgage Banking | Chase
170 The Plaza, Teaneck NJ 07666
C: 201.694.4677 | F: 844.232.5274
stuart.greenbaum@chase.com



Jordan Kadry
Senior Loan Originator
NMLS #1206628
jkadry@fmm.com
145 East 57th Street, 6th FL
New York, NY 10022
Direct: (212) 710-0341
Cell: (516) 456-3842



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