

Parshat Acharey Mot-Kedoshim 5778

At the beginning of this parsha verse 2 states, "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel and say to them: holy shall you be... ". Rav Shimshon Refuel Hirsch comments that only at the giving of the very first Law which Israel received, the command of the Pesach offering, do we find the order written in similar terms ,to announce the Law to the *whole* community. The reason for this is because this admonition, "*holy shall you be* " refers to the highest degree of moral human perfection and every individual needs to be included in this call to very height of absolute morality.

Rabbi M Miller suggests that Moshe had to speak to the whole congregation, to each one individually, because in the question of self restraint even from pleasures generally permitted, each individual must know his own nature...detect in himself the inclinations that threaten to degrade him and exercise on himself those restraints that will restore the balance.

Rabbi Chiya in Midrash Vayikra Rabbah 24:5 teaches that our parsha was taught to the entire nation "since the majority of the Torah's fundamental principles may be found therein." In contrast, Rabbi Levi suggests another reason. Because the Aseret Hadibrot are alluded to in this parsha. He proves this by quoting verses in our parsha that correspond to the Aseret Hadibrot from *Shemot, Parshat Yitro*.

An example of this is chapter 20 v 2 which contains the mitzvah of believing in the existence of G-d. "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*"- "*I am the Lord your G-d*". This parsha has a similar phrase of "*Ani Hashem Elokechem*". The Midrash presents this parallelism on a commandment by commandment basis. Despite there being grammatical and other differences, there is little doubt that this is a sort of repetition of the Aseret Hadibrot.

The famous 15th century Spanish commentator, The Abarbanel, also comments on the repetition of the Aseret Hadibrot in a different form and why it was said before the whole congregation. He says "the order of the Aseret Hadibrot in our parsha is different than that found in parsha Yitro. This was to explain to them (the full assembly) that the Ten Utterances and the essential principles of the Torah are not to be followed because of the inherent logic found therein as based upon our intellect, rather because the Holy One Blessed be He commanded us to walk in his ways (*lelech b'drachov*) and

to cleave to him (*u'ldavkah bo*). Moreover we are duty bound to do all that is good and perfect ...simply because G-d commanded us to do so."

He continues to ask " Why does the Torah say *Kedoshim T'hihyu*?" "*You should be holy...*". He answers that one should not think that kedoshim t'hihyu refers solely to forbidden sexual relations due to its juxtaposition to the laws at the end of Acharei Mot but this phrase refers to each of the Ten Utterances, This means the Jewish people should be holy and sanctify themselves in all matters.

The parsha of Kedoshim follows the sedras from Vayikra to Acharei Mot. What is the significance of this order? According to Rav Shimshon Refuel Hirsch, the morality is learned from G-d's word which rests beneath the wings of the keruvim. This concept is symbolically represented by the mishkan (parshat Vayikra) and the karbonos (parshat Tzav). However, this concept can only come to fruition by a people who live and breathe the list of laws concerning forbidden foods, purity /impurity and sexual immorality (parshat Shimini through to Acharei Mot) . Only then can they be told "*Be holy, for I your G-d, is holy*". Parshat Kedoshim highlights how a holy Jewish life should be. As Rav Hirsch says "They are the principles of the Mishpatim of a society based on G-d's justice." Here we have a command to strive for the highest degree of human moral perfection.

However the concept is very different to the reality of such ideals i.e. its difficult to live up to this in real life. Chapter 19 v 18 states "*Do not take revenge or bear a grudge (נטר) against the members of your people, but you shall love your neighbour's welfare as though it were your own; I am G-d*."

From the root of the word נטר we derive the word מטרה meaning "target". To Target something you must concentrate on an object for a time to be able to hit it. This is similar to hatred kept silently within one's heart i.e bearing a grudge. The verse prior to the one above states that if a person feels someone has wronged them , it is his duty to respond verbally. Our verse asks of that offended person that even if the reproof turns out to be fruitless, he may not take revenge and the very remembrance of the wrong suffered is to be purged from his mind and feelings. In this way we recognise that G-d is the ruler of the world and we acknowledge that by submitting our feelings entirely to his will.