

The  
**CHASSIDUS**  
**PERSPECTIVE**  
*with Reb Yoel Kahn*

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## AS HOLY AS HASHEM

The concepts addressed in Parshas Kedoshim are particularly significant. As Rashi explains, the reason Parshas Kedoshim was said before a gathering of all of Bnei Yisroel is because it contains “most of the fundamentals of Torah.”

The opening command of the *parshah* is “*Kedoshim tihyu*, you shall be holy.” What does this mean?

Rashi explains that this means we must separate from forbidden relationships and *aveiros*. The Ramban, however, offers an alternative explanation: *Kedoshim tihyu* means we must separate even from permitted activities. We should not indulge even in permitted pleasures; rather, our eating, drinking, and so on should be *lesheim shamayim*, for the sake of Hashem. In this way we become holy, just as Hashem is holy.

In fact, according to a number of opinions, this concept (to abstain even from what it is permitted) is a *mitzvas aseï min hatorah*, a Biblical command.

This seems strange. On the one hand, Torah emphasizes that these activities are *permitted*. We are dealing with activities that do not entail any *aveirah*. At the same time, making sure they are done *lesheim shamayim* is not merely a *hiddur*; it is a *mitzvas aseï*, and is a fundamental part of Torah!

Why is this idea so important?

### INCONSEQUENTIAL NO LONGER

When one is on a lower level, certain things do not pose a problem. However, when one ascends higher and merits to receive greater levels of *Elokus*, the previously inconsequential element must now be removed.

For example: Before Hashem commanded Avrohom to do the *mitzvah* of *milah*, the fact that he was uncircumcised was acceptable. However, when it came time for him to reach a higher level, it was necessary for him to remove the *arlah*. (This is the meaning of the *possuk* written in association with *milah*:

“*His’halech lefanai*, walk before Me.” *Lefanai* is associated with *pnimiyus*. In order to reach the inner levels of *Elokus*, Avrohom first needed to circumcise himself.)

Later, when Hashem gave us the Torah, removing the thicker *arlah* (as *milah* was done until then) was insufficient. To receive

the higher levels that would then be revealed, the step of *priah* was added, in which the thin covering is also removed.

The same is true here. The goal of *Matan Torah* is to achieve the revelations of Moshiach. At that time, we will merit to reach a level of holiness similar to that of Hashem.

As the Gemara states, “In the future,

‘*Kadosh*’ will be stated before the *tzaddikim* [referring to all Jews], just as it is stated before Hashem.” (This is similar to the verse in Parshas Kedoshim: “You shall be holy for I am holy,” which means that our holiness is similar to that of Hashem.)

In order to attain such a level, it is not sufficient to merely refrain from what is forbidden. We must even abstain from what is *permitted*, and make sure that our permissible activities are done *lesheim shamayim*.

### DO YOU HAVE PRIVATE AFFAIRS?

What is indeed the difference between a person who fulfills all the *mitzvos* and refrains from any *aveirah*, but does not do his permissible activities *lesheim shamayim*, and someone who does?

The purpose of Torah and *mitzvos* is to connect to Hashem. However, this can be approached in one of two ways.

Let’s imagine two people. One person does everything Hashem expects of him; he is careful to do every single *mitzvah* and to refrain from any *aveirah*. However, he feels as if this is all an added element to who *he* is. He and the Torah are two separate entities; it’s just that since he is a believing Jew, he believes that Hashem is his Master and he must fulfill everything He commands. But in his mind, this is not who *he* is. He is a person

with a life of his own; it's simply that he has no choice but to listen to Hashem.

With the second person, by contrast, Torah and *mitzvos* penetrate him until he and they become one; they are what he is all about. His very existence is connected to Hashem.

Where can you see the difference between them? With permitted activities.

The connection of the first person to Hashem is limited to when he studies Torah and performs *mitzvos*. When he is involved in his personal matters—when he eats, takes a walk, does business, and so on—he is now himself, living his own life. These are his private affairs, and after all, he's not doing anything wrong! He sees no reason to imbue even these matters with holiness.

Torah tells us that this is not the correct approach. A person should not have “private affairs”; his very existence should be connected to Hashem. Where is this apparent? When even permissible acts are performed for Hashem's sake.

## TO BELONG TO HASHEM

On the *possuk*, “You shall be a treasure for Me,” the *Mechilta* comments: “You should be My acquisition. You should be involved in Torah and not in other things.”

What does the *Mechilta* mean with being involved in “other things”? In a situation where a person is able to study Torah, failure to do so would entail the *aveirah* of *bittul Torah*. There is no need for the *Mechilta* to admonish us not to be involved in “other things.”

We must say that the *Mechilta* is discussing a case where one is unable to study Torah, for whatever reason. When he carries a non-Torah-related conversation, he is not transgressing any *aveirah*. Yet, since he has private affairs unrelated to Torah, it is a sign that he is not Hashem's “acquisition.” A true slave does not have his own identity; he belongs entirely to his master. For a Jew to truly belong to Hashem, he cannot have any “private affairs”; the Torah must permeate everything he does.

We can now understand why, in order to merit the revelations of Moshiach, we must sanctify even our permitted endeavors.

When Moshiach comes, it will be readily apparent how we are completely unified with Hashem—“Yisroel, the Torah, and Hashem are one.” Our holiness will be one with Hashem's holiness.

In order to achieve this, it is not enough to refrain from *aveiros* (the first explanation of *Kedoshim tihiyu*). Rather, says the Ramban, we must

strive to bring sanctity even into our permitted activities, thereby demonstrating how our very existence belongs to Hashem. Moreover, this is not merely a *hiddur*; it is a *mitzvas ase*, and an important one at that—a “fundamental of the Torah.”

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 1, pp. 256–259.

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Upon ascending to a higher level, elements that were previously inconsequential may need to be removed.

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