



Acharei Mos/Kedoshim - Opening Pockets of Holy Space

Yom Kippur Mincha?!?

This week's double parsha opens up with the sacrificial order of Yom Kippur and apropos that it is the *leining* for Yom Kippur morning. However for Mincha on Yom Kippur we read from the end of the Parsha where it talks about all the laws of forbidden relationships. Why do we read that on Yom Kippur? It seems so inappropriate! If it's about reading further in Parshas Acharei Mos, there is a whole section about the laws of how the Jews in the desert had to eat their meat as a 'korbon Shlomim' and the laws of covering the blood of kosher birds and wildlife which immediately follows the avodah of Yom Kippur. Why skip that and read the laws of forbidden relationships? What does it have to do with Yom Kippur?

Evil takes up space

There is something peculiar about the forbidden relationships that comes up repeatedly in our Parsha. **It's as if the defilement of forbidden relationships takes up space!** The whole section is introduced as "not doing like the **land of Egypt** and not doing like the **land of Canaan**" as if it's not just the people but the place. The Torah says repeatedly that because of the sin of forbidden relationships the **land was defiled and the land vomited out the previous inhabitants** and if we will be guilty of forbidden relations we will be vomited out also. The Torah says that if a person gives out his own daughter for promiscuity **the land will be promiscuous also** which Rashi explains that the land will be unfaithful and not bear fruit, and the fruit that it is meant to bear will actually grow elsewhere, but not in the land of Israel. As if forbidden relationships take up space, affect the ground, and if it's 'Holy

Ground'- it vomits the perpetrators out. How do we understand this?

Creating Holy Space?

Having made this observation, we can see that Rashi is alluding to this phenomenon. as Parshas Kedoshim opens up with the command of "being Holy" right after the Torah had already spoken about forbidden relations at the end of Acharei Mos. Rashi says: "Be 'Holy' is to be separate from forbidden relationships for any **place** where you find a safeguard against promiscuity **there** you will find Holiness". Just like promiscuities 'defiles space', so too **safeguarding against promiscuity generates Holiness in that place!** How do we understand this?

The invisible pattern

Chazal tell us in Maseches Chagigah that the laws of forbidden relationships has an aspect called "**Sod Arayos**" - The Secret of the prohibitions of promiscuity. This aspect belongs to the realm of the "secrets of Torah" that cannot be taught to the masses. This subject can only be taught to a maximum of two students at a time. What is the big secret in the prohibitions of promiscuity? The Maharal in the first introduction to the Gevuros Hashem explains that these laws actually are indicators that reality is not as simple as it looks - it is a highly complex multi-dimensional maze. This is best illustrated by the prohibitions of promiscuity: There can be two relatives that are equally genetically close to you but one is a relationship that is not only permissible but even called a mitzvah, like a man marrying his niece. However, a man marrying his aunt is a severe prohibition, even though the genetic difference is the same.

these laws show us that reality has a special order to it that the eye cannot see and to delve into the depths of the laws of forbidden relations is to delve into the secret arrangement of the cosmic maze that the eye can't see and that belongs to the field of the secrets of Torah.

Marching orders

This realization helps us understand the necessity of Halacha and all its myriad of details. We need a map to avoid hitting those invisible blocks that we need to get around. Halacha instructs us when and how to move through time and space. The word Halacha is from the same root as "Halicha"- walking because it's the "marching orders" that navigate through the Maze of reality.

Extra Space

Reality is not just a maze, it also has many more Dimensions than the eye can see. There are "pockets of space" that are revealed and accessed at special times in special places *[there are also "wormholes" that can cut through many dimensions in an instant. Chazal refer to Teshuva as "opening up a tunnel the tunnels through the infinite barriers between us and Hashem in just one instant"!* we will discuss this more as we approach the *Yomim Noraim IY"H*] We find many examples of these pockets of space being accessed, particularly, in Eretz Yisroel and more so in Yerushalayim, even more so in the Beis Hamikdash, and perpetually in the "kodesh Hakodshim" that the Kohen Gadol entered on Yom Kippur. The Gemara in Gittin tells us that "Tur Malka" used to be in area that had an **astronomical** amount of Jews living there. One of the sages visited the area and said he would be surprised if it could hold 600,000 reeds, and yet it held a **vast** number of people. The Gemara explains that Eretz Yisroel has an amazing phenomena when the Jewish people live there the land gets "bigger" in the Merit of the Jews living there. Chazal tell us that even with all the Jewish people crammed into Yerushalayim at the time of the Aliya l'regel no one ever said "it is

too cramped for me to sleep in Yerushalayim". Similarly, when all the Jewish people were in the Beis Hamikdash they stood crowded but when they bowed and spread themselves out it was spacious. The Gemara in Megilla says that the 'Aron' in the "Kodesh HaKodashim" must not have taken up space because mathematically there was no room to hold the 'Aron' there together with the wingspan of the "Cherubim". The common denominator between all of the above is that "Holy Land" has additional space from Another Dimension when we act "Holy". Whether it's the Holiness of the Jewish people conducting a Jewish life in Eretz Yisroel, whether it's the Holiness of everyone going up to yerushalayim for the pilgrimage of 'Aliya l'regel', whether it's the Holiness of the Jewish people bowing before Hashem, whether it's the innate holiness of the Torah represented by the 'Aron', in all cases the Holiness opens up 'pockets of space' from the dimensions of Holiness which is only accessible in the "Holy Land". In the sefer "Ohr HaChochma" from a talmid of the Baal Shem Tov he writes in Parshas Re'eh **the countries outside of Eretz Yisroel are called "Chutz L'Aretz" which can be read "half of the land" ("Chutz" derived from "Chetzi" - half) Only Eretz Yisroel is called "Aretz" in the full sense because ALL the dimensions – the earthly and the holy – "Chutz L'aretz" only has the earthly half. This is why Holy conduct does not open up any manifest additional space in Chutz L'aretz.**

Defiled Space

Since Eretz Yisroel is a "holy land", it doesn't tolerate promiscuous behavior. Promiscuity directly violates the "holy space". The laws of forbidden relations run parallel to how reality is structured – breaking those laws destroys the cosmic order even on the earthly side of things, and so much more so that it seals off the dimensions of holiness. We have learnt repeatedly in the name of **my Rebbe Hagaon HaRav Moshe Shapira zt"l** that "Tuma" is to be sealed off. places like the land of Egypt and the

land of Canaan **before the Jewish people came there** were not only sealed off from the hidden dimensions of Holiness, **but even sparks of holiness that can be manifest within earthly space was also sealed out.**

The irony in the Mesilas Yeshorim

With this we could resolve a difficulty. There is a seemingly mixed message we get from the "Mesilas Yeshorim". As one progresses through the book to higher and higher levels of saintliness the 'Ramchal' 'pushes' the reader more and more. The demands for abstaining from physical pleasure increase from chapter to chapter. But then we reach the final chapter of the book which talks about "kedusha"- Holiness per se. here everything flips! The "holy man" should eat for his eating meat is like sacrifices and he should drink wine because his drinking wine is the same like pouring the sacraments on the "Mizbeach"! What happened? So long as a person is guided by his base impulses he will only be able to access the profane earthly three-dimensional space. A person who interacts with the world because of his "Yetzer harah" is only coming into contact with the dimensions that are tainted with evil. Therefore, if he eats food out of gluttony that food will only do him spiritual harm and the same holds true with all physical Pleasures. The 'indulger' is only accessing the three dimensions where evil can have a foothold and the dimensions of Holiness remain sealed off to him. In that state he must refrain from physicality as much as possible, because the More he indulges the more evil he's taking in! But after you've purified yourself and you've tamed the "yetzer harah", the "Yetzer HaTov" is your guide! **If you interact with the world with your "Yetzer HaTov" you will be able to access the dimensions of the Sparks of Holiness in everything!** He who has attained the level of Holiness per se, because he has subdued his "yetzer harah", can indulge because he's taking with his "Yetzer HaTov" that accesses the dimensions of the object which have the Sparks of Holiness in them.

Omer vs Shavuos

This also explains the pattern that we see in the shift from Omer to Shavuos. It is well known from the books of Chassidus and Mussar that the 49 days of the Omer are parallel to the 48 traits that are necessary to acquire Torah and the 49th day is for the purpose of reviewing them all. Amongst those traits is to refrain from physical pleasure, particularly minimizing indulgence in food and drink. However on Shavuos which is the day of the giving of the Torah per se we are commanded to indulge as the Gemara in Pesachim says: **"all opinions agree that one must indulge on Shavuos because it's the day that the Torah was given".** This seemingly goes against the idea that one has to refrain from food and drink in order to acquire to Torah. The pattern of going from Omer to Shavuos is perfectly parallel to the pattern in the "Mesilas Yeshorim". During the Omer we are working on purifying ourselves every day. Every day we purify another aspect of ourselves by taking on another one of the traits necessary to acquire Torah. These traits are all about minimizing the "yetzer harah" and the effects it has on the person. **Once we have purified ourselves and we merited to be sanctified by the giving of the Torah - it is time to indulge!** Now we are "Holy" and we are accessing the dimensions of Holiness of whatever we touch!

Lag B'Omer

With this we could appreciate transition that happens on Lag B'omer. **My rebbe HaGaon HaRav Moshe Shapira zt"l** told us that many years ago he saw in the 'Hatzofeh' newspaper an advertisement in the classifieds entitled "seeking lost object". When he look closely he saw that the 'Seeker' told his story: he had been by the Rogatchover Gaon on Lag B'Omer and he asked the Rogatchover what Lag B'Omer is all about. The Rogatchover demonstrated from a yerushalmi that the pilgrimage to Yerushalyim for Shavuos actually commenced unlock the man was so amazed by the Rogatchover's

brilliance he neglected to take note of where that Yerushalmi was. So he was us advertising “looking for his lost object” – the Yerushalmi the Rogatchover showed him. Lag B’omer is the great transition when we start to feel the power of Shavuot. The students of Rebbe Akiva stopped dying because they were tapping in to the life of Torah (Maharal Nesiv HaTorah). It is also the big day of one of his surviving students Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai who gave us the Zohar, the central book of Kabbalah. Kabbalah charts out the map of reality - including the invisible dimensions of Holiness that are everywhere, if you know how to find it. Without Kabbalah a person could have the purest intentions when eating but he will not necessarily access its spiritual side. We need the Kabbalah to know what we’re looking for, and of course none of it will work if we don’t purify ourselves first. That’s why we are very careful not to teach Kabbalah to the uninitiated and not to anyone of corrupt character that is not in control of their Passions. **The Ramchal in his “Adir Bamarom” says that Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai gathered his students in a “Idra” in order that their concentrated presence open up a pocket of “Holy space” with the ‘scent of Gan Eden’ with which to gain the spiritual purity and strength make the loftiest parts of the Zohar. Lag B’Omer begins the great transition of going from mitigating evil to accessing the hidden dimensions of Holiness.**

Finding “Holy Space” today

We now understand that Rashi meant it all literally: “any **place** where there is safeguards against promiscuity **there in that place** you will find holiness”. This explains why we *Lein* the laws of the prohibition of promiscuity by mincha on Yom Kippur. When we do Teshuva we’re meant to go back to Hashem – literally. In the words of the Rambam in the ‘preamble’ to the laws of Teshuva: “The sinner has to return from his sin **before Hashem** and confess”. The Rambam says there in the first Halacha: “When a man does Teshuva and returns from his sin he must confess **before Hashem**”. On Yom Kippur,

the great day of Teshuva and atonement, says the posuk in this week’s Parsha: “for on this day Hashem will atone for you, to purify you from all your sins **before Hashem you will be purified**”. that’s why the Kohen Gadol goes into the “Kodesh HaKodashim” **to be before Hashem** - in the holiest of holies where a special pocket of holy space opened up for the Holiness of the Aron that was there. We are purified by immersing ourselves in “Holy Space” which is “Before Hashem”. What do we do in our day and age where we don’t have don’t have a “holy place” to go to? The message of hope is: **wherever we are very careful and set up safeguards against promiscuity there is our “Holy Space”!** Just like promiscuity defiles not just a person, but also the space around him, the opposite is also true! To the extent that you avoid any forbidden relationships and you have safeguards - **there** you will find Holiness. We read this Mincha time to remind ourselves and give ourselves the encouragement that you can find Holiness even now! even in this era when we don’t have a Beis HaMikdash and all the Divine service, and we don’t go into the holiest of holies - we could still have **being before Hashem** and be purified by being in that Holy Space by setting up safeguards against any form of promiscuity. in the Merit of Jewish modesty there we can find Holiness and that will be our “holy space” that will give us the purifying experience that we used to get from the Kodesh HaKodashim on Yom Kippur

Good Shabbos



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