

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 259

Acharei-Kedoshim | The Jews' Holiness Influences the Worlds

MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

Dedicated to the hatzlacha of
Noam Avidor and her Family

...*~* PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL *~*...

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Publisher and Distributer of the Teachings of
Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l

 500 Frank W Burr Blvd Suite 47
Teaneck, NJ 07666

 en@h-l.org.il


 www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en

 HaKatzir 666, Netivot, Israel

 (954) 800-6526

 HameirLaaretsEN

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Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim

Blunting the Wicked Son's Teeth

Leil HaSeder was taking place in full swing. The whole family sat around the set table, reading the Haggadah with songs and melodies.

When they reached the passage about the wicked son – where we are instructed to blunt his teeth and tell him, "*Had he been there, he would not have been redeemed*" – Yossi's brow furrowed in perplexity.

"I don't understand," he thought. "If we examine the Haggadah's words carefully, we learn that we tell the wicked son: '*Had you been there in the Egyptian exile, you would not have been redeemed; but now, in*

the era after we have received the Torah, you surely will be redeemed.'¹ According to our holy Torah of truth, '*no one banished from Him will remain banished.*'

But this is a comforting declaration; how is this supposed to 'blunt his teeth' and set the wicked son straight?"

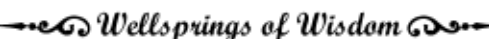
Yossi carried this question for a very long time, but only on Shabbat Acharei Mot–Kedoshim, nearly a month after Pesach, as he listened to the reading of the Torah portion in shul, did the answer suddenly dawn upon him.

Before we share this answer, let us begin with an introduction...

Rebuke – With Care and Love

This Shabbat, we read two Torah portions that are united as one, Parashat *Acharei Mot* and

Parashat *Kedoshim*. Parashat *Kedoshim* begins with the verses: "*G-d spoke to Moses,*



saying: *Speak to the entire congregation of the children of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, G-d your G-d, am holy*” (Vayikra 19:1–2). Our Sages explain that this parashah has a unique feature compared to others: whereas the other parashiot were taught in groups, Parashat Kedoshim was taught to all of the people of Israel together. The reason for this is that the commandments of Parashat Kedoshim are uniquely important – “the majority of the fundamental principles of the Torah depend on it” (Rashi ad loc.).

One such commandment is written in the verse: “*You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall certainly rebuke your fellow, and you shall not bear sin because of him*” (Vayikra 19:17). Rebuke (*tochachah*) is absolutely necessary, and without it, there is no way to progress. But this holds true only if one rebukes with love – and does not “bury” the other person with admonition and critique.²

When rebuke is given improperly, the outcome is

— *~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~* —

2. The purpose of rebuke is to open a person’s eyes and to remind him that he must improve himself. Generally, rebuke is given through words, yet at times it may also be conveyed in other ways—through being a role model of proper behavior and thus sanctifying the Name of Heaven.

On this subject, Rabbi Goel Elkarif, related (*Doresh Tov* – Shemot II, p. 189):

A Jew from Jerusalem was stricken with a serious cardiac illness, and on the doctors’

advice, he flew to Australia to receive special treatment at a local hospital that had specialists for his condition.

The Jerusalemite was of unusually large build. When he arrived at the hospital, they wanted to dress him in the usual hospital garb, but at that time, the hospital lacked garments in very large sizes, and therefore, they could not find anything to clothe him.

A nurse on the ward took the initiative: she took two white hospital sheets,

Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim - Rebuke – With Care and Love

joined them together, fashioned from them a sort of enormous gown, and they served him as clothing.

The Jew was about to undergo a difficult heart surgery, and before the operation, he strolled slowly through the hospital corridors. His appearance was unusual—an enormous man, with a snow-white beard, wrapped entirely in white garments... He noticed that one of the patients on the ward was looking at him in great fear; by his appearance, it seemed that he too was a Jew. The Jerusalemite tried to approach him, but then the man began to cry out in dread: "Do not come near me, do not come any closer to me!"

The Jerusalemite asked him, "Why do you ask me not to come near you?"

He replied, "I do not want to die! I want to live!"

At first, the Jerusalemite did not understand his intent, until he grasped what he meant: with the huge white sheets that were wrapped around him, he must have thought that I was the Angel of Death...

The Jerusalemite was by nature a cheerful and joyous person, and despite his illness, he preserved his zest for life and his sense of humor. He thought to himself: If this Jew believes that I am the Angel of Death, I will continue to "play the game" and we shall see how things proceed...

The Jerusalemite said to him, "So when should I come to get you?..."

The man answered in a trembling voice, "Give me three days."

"And what will you do during these three days?"

"I will repent."

The Jerusalemite thundered at him, "I agree to give you three days, and promise me that during these three days you will indeed repent!"

They parted, each to his own way. After three days, he came to the man's room, and to his astonishment, he discovered that the Jew had passed away. He inquired about him from his family members, who told him a remarkable story: this Jew was a Holocaust survivor, and after the war, he grew distant from religion. For fifty years, he lived his life in complete detachment from any Jewish experience.

He had been hospitalized, and when he saw the Jerusalem Jew with the enormous white sheets, it appeared to him that the Angel of Death was near... As a result of his encounter with the "Angel of Death," he had thoughts of repentance, recited the Shema, and decided to change his will and bequeath his money to charity and to Torah institutions.

Not long thereafter, his soul departed...

Behold the great and holy power of a Jewish soul...

grim: it can bury the recipient's inner strength deep in the ground, to the point of destroying his ability to spiritually recover, G-d forbid.

To quote my father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel, ZY"A (Imrei Noam, *Kedoshim*, Essay 4):

"If we reflect, we see that before the commandment 'hocheach tochiach' (you shall surely rebuke), in that very same verse, the Torah commands: 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart.' And in the verse after the commandment 'you shall surely rebuke,' the Torah commands: 'You shall love your fellow as yourself' (Vayikra 19:18).

This teaches us that only if, at the moment you see the other person doing something wrong, no feeling of hatred toward him awakens in your heart – G-d forbid; on the contrary, you feel love and compassion for him, and precisely because of that you are pained to see him doing something unworthy of him, and you want to rebuke

him so that he will correct it and attain wholeness – only then does the commandment 'hocheach tochiach' (you shall surely rebuke) apply to you. For then surely your rebuke will be accepted by him and have the desired effect, since it comes from a loving, caring heart and the other person senses that."

Only when the rebuke comes from a loving, caring heart and is delivered with self-control, only then is there a chance that it will be heard.

As we find, when the Holy One, blessed be He, came to rebuke Miriam and Aharon for speaking against Moses, He opened His reproof with gentle words of entreaty. As it is written: *"Hear now My words"* (Bamidbar 12:6) – and 'na' is a term of request and plea" (Rashi ad loc.). The Siftei Chachamim explains: *"Even though the wrath of G-d had flared against them and He departed their presence, nevertheless G-d used a term of pleading, and He spoke to them calmly. Had His words*

been spoken in anger, they would not have been heeded.

This teaches us, by way of example, that a human being should ensure his words are spoken calmly.”

Likewise, our Sages have said (Shabbat 34a) that when a person wants to instruct the members of his household to do something that is vital and necessary, he should speak pleasantly, so that his words will be accepted.

Above all, the *essential* point is that the words of rebuke must come from the depths of the heart and out of genuine love. If they do, even if the content of the message is harsh or bitter, it will be willingly accepted by the listeners.

To quote the words of the holy Ohr HaChaim (on Bereshit 1:1, note 17): *“One who reveres the word of G-d speaks from the uprightness of his soul; and since that is so, the listener’s soul will recognize [this truth] and accept the reproof. But if the words*

come only from ‘the body,’ the soul will feel no connection and will be unable to listen.”

Similarly, we find that G-d said to the prophet Yechezkel: *“It is fitting for Me and for you to rebuke Israel... If you will rebuke them – then rebuke them; but if you will not rebuke them – I will rebuke them with My reproof”* (Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabbah, ch. 5). Although at that time it was necessary to rebuke the people of Israel with extremely harsh reproof, as it is written: *“Make known to her all her abominations”* (Yechezkel 22:2), nonetheless, such harsh words would not be accepted in their hearts, unless they would receive the reproof through Yechezkel the prophet himself – because his heart was overflowing with boundless love for the people of Israel.

Therefore, Yechezkel’s rebuke is described as: *“A love-song with a beautiful voice and well-played music, and they hear your words...”* (Yechezkel 33:32), since even when Yechezkel spoke the

harshest rebukes to the Jewish people, his words were as pleasant to his listeners as hearing a beautiful song; they penetrated the hearts of the Jewish people – because his words were issued from a truly loving heart...

Indeed, there is much to expand upon and clarify in this mitzvah of rebuke: on which

matters one must rebuke another about; what is the most appropriate time for rebuke; who is fit to rebuke; how and in what manner to rebuke; etc.

But for now, we wish to focus on the very earliest point, the source and the roots of rebuke. We shall explain this by means of a parable...

The Melody of the Lost Princess

There once lived a king who had an only daughter, talented and learned, perfect in every way. He sought a suitable groom: wise and understanding, handsome and of fine character, of noble lineage and lofty stature, who would marry his daughter and inherit his throne – who would magnify the prestige of his kingdom and bring happiness to his daughter.

The perfect groom was found – a true prince, perfect in every quality.

The king rejoiced and ordered preparations for a wedding feast the likes of which had never

been seen. By his command, an enormous area was prepared on the seashore, and tables were set for tens of thousands of revelers. The king gathered the finest musicians, who composed special tunes in honor of the occasion and rehearsed them repeatedly until the melodies were familiar to all.

On the appointed day, the bride boarded the ship that would bring her to the place of the wedding canopy, where tens of thousands of guests were waiting. The musicians went up on deck and sounded a trumpet fanfare, playing the wedding

anthem, and the ship weighed anchor and set sail on its course...

But alas, suddenly a terrible storm erupted. The usually calm sea roused into towering waves, raging and foaming and battering the ship. It rose to the sky and plunged to the depths, tossed from wave to wave and swept beyond the bay, far, far away – until it washed up on the shore of a neighboring land. This was the land of the king's enemy, with whom he was at war...

The ruler of that land was delighted at the chance to take revenge on his foe. He assembled his ministers and advisors and asked, “What shall we do with the daughter of my enemy, who has drifted into our land?”

They all answered, “Kill her outright!”

He said, "Your counsel is no good. Her father, the king, will hear of it, and in his fury, he will wreak destruction upon us. He will muster his entire army and march against us in a dreadful war – who can

withstand the rage of a bereaved father? No, we mustn't draw the rope too tight."

All those assembled agreed to his words.

Instead, they said, “Let us throw her into a prison pit.”

The ruler once again said, “That counsel is also no good. Her father will find out, and he will not rest nor calm down until he frees her.”

The ruler offered his own idea and said, "I will neither imprison her nor set her free. I will put her in the company of the servant girls in the cookhouse. She will help them with their work, and she will eat to her heart's content."

They did not understand his intent. What would he gain by this?

He said, “Why don't you get it? This will be the ultimate revenge!”

They looked at him and shrugged. They could not grasp his idea.

He smiled and explained: “I have no doubt that the king will not rest or be still. He will try to free his daughter by all means of pressure, by bribery, by negotiation – he may even go to war – and eventually he will succeed in freeing her. But in the meantime, she will stay with the kitchen-maids and socialize with them. She will grow accustomed to their coarse language and their prattle, to their vulgarities and their uncouth manners and repulsive habits, to their commonness and ignorance. By the time her father manages to ransom her, she will return to him like one of the maids, common and debased. Her father’s heart will be torn apart, and the husband destined for her will despise her, and our revenge upon our enemy will be complete...”

They all clapped and exclaimed, “There is none as wise as our ruler!”

He went ahead and did as he said. He ordered that her splendid bridal gown be exchanged for a servant's smock

and that she be taken to the kitchen quarters. At first, she was gloomy and kept to herself, but time did its work. The silly jokes that had grated on her ears began to bring a smile to her lips. Before long, she took interest in the tawdry gossip, and soon she herself was participating in it – even her manner of speech became crude...

The pure, regal lines of her visage disappeared, and when the ruler came to visit, to see how his scheme was progressing, he struggled to pick out the king’s daughter from among all of the servant girls. She truly looked like a servant born and bred...

The ruler returned to his chamber, gathered all his ministers, and shouted: "We have succeeded! Now, even if her father, the king, manages to redeem her, he will redeem only her body. Her soul and character he will not and cannot redeem – the princess's spirit is dead!"...

A few more days passed. Then one day, one of the

servant girls said, “Hush, listen to that beautiful melody !”

They all cocked an ear, and the king’s daughter turned pale and fainted.

What had happened? To mark the half-year of her captivity, the ruler had decided to command the king’s musicians who had been taken captive from the ship to play for him the tunes of the wedding that never took place. They struck up a fanfare and played the wedding anthem – whose echoes reached the cookhouse...

The bride heard it, shuddered – and was jolted back to her senses. In one instant, she became aware of how low she had fallen; she realized the extent of her degradation. Woe to her ! She was and remains a king's daughter – and a future queen. She is betrothed, and her fiancé certainly waits to marry her. Her father will surely not rest nor be still until he

rescues her, so how had she forgotten it all? How had she drifted and sunk into the depths of degeneration and the abyss of ignorance and coarseness?

And so she fainted...

Her companions quickly hurried to revive her. She opened her eyes, and the strains of the royal wedding music were still resounding in the air and wafting through the atmosphere. Her vision blurred and she smiled. This time, the strains sounded like a promise: *Be strong and of good courage; hold on, uplift yourself, keep your distance from the lowly creatures around you. Your assured deliverance is soon to come – you will yet return as a princess, not as a lowly kitchen-maid...*³

The moral of this parable is very deep and lofty – and in our discussion this week, we will attempt to partly explore its depths...

The Quarries of the Sefirot, Souls, Angels, and Kelipot

The prophet Yirmiyahu prophesied in the period before and after the destruction of the First Temple. The essence of his prophecies was a rebuke of the Jewish people for their sins and to warn them of the impending exile and calamity that would come if they did not return in teshuvah (repentance). The bulk of these prophecies is concentrated in the first 24 chapters of his book.

Chapter 13 begins as follows: *“Thus said G-d to me: Go and buy yourself a linen belt (ezor), and put it on your loins, but do not bring it into water”* (Yirmiyahu 13:1).

G-d revealed Himself to Yirmiyahu and commanded him: Go and buy yourself an ezor – a linen waistband – and gird it upon your loins. And even after it becomes soiled with sweat, do not wash it in water, so that it will rot quickly.

Yirmiyahu the prophet carried out G-d’s command and girded the belt on his loins.

“And the word of G-d came to me a second time, saying” (ibid. v.3): Take the belt that you bought, which is on your loins, and arise, go to the Euphrates River, and hide it there, while it is still sweat-soaked, in a cleft of the rock.

So I went and hid the belt at the Euphrates, and I covered it with dirt from above, as G-d had commanded me.

After many days had passed, G-d said to me: Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the belt that I commanded you to hide there.

So I went to the Euphrates and dug into the crevice of the rock, and I took the belt from the place where I had hidden it – and behold, the belt was ruined; it was useless for anything.

“And the word of G-d came to me, saying” (ibid. v.8): Just as this belt is destroyed, so will I destroy the pride and power of Judah and Jerusalem, which are so great.

This evil nation, who refuse to listen to My words – who follow the will of their evil heart, and follow other g-ds to serve them and bow to them – they shall be like this belt, which is good for nothing.

“For as a belt clings to the loins of a man, so have I caused the entire house of Israel and the entire house of Judah to cling to Me,” says G-d, *“to be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory – but they did not listen”* (ibid. v.11).

Hidden within these powerful words of rebuke are wonderful gems: in the midst of this very stern rebuke, G-d revealed the greatness of the Jewish people.

The divine kabbalist Rabbi Chaim Vital, ZY"A, writes

(Sha'arei Kedushah, Part III, Gate 2) as follows:

“The first emanated creation of the Creator was the creation called the *Ten Sefirot*. This creation is called the ‘quarry of the Sefirot.’

Afterwards, He created another creation – a light that includes within it all the souls of the Jewish people – and this is called the ‘quarry of souls.’

The quarry of souls is attached to the quarry of the Sefirot, as it says: ‘For as a belt clings to the loins of a man, so have I caused the entire house of Israel and the entire house of Judah to cling to Me, says G-d, to be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory...’

The light that extends downward from the Sefirot must first pass through the quarry of souls – and therefore G-d is called ‘G-d of Israel.’

From the quarry of souls, the souls of the Jewish people are hewn, and they descend to this

world, each soul according to its mission.

Thus, the entities closest to the quarry of the Sefirot are the souls of the Jewish people – and they are attached together, as the verse states, ‘For as a belt clings to the loins of a man, so have I caused the entire house of Israel and the entire house of Judah to cling to Me.’

The Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Jewish people the power to direct the world and to draw down an abundance of salvation and mercy into all of the worlds. This is the meaning of: ‘for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory’ – four terms that correspond to the four worlds: Atzilut, Beriyah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah.

Afterwards, He created another creation – a light that includes within it all the angels – called the ‘quarry of angels,’ from it all of the angels were hewn.

The quarry of angels is an outer garment to the light of the quarry of souls, and the angels

receive their vitality from the quarry of souls.

Therefore, at the destruction of the Temple, when the flow of sustenance to the quarry of souls ceased, the angels remained without sustenance – about that moment it is said: ‘Behold, their mighty ones cried outside’ (Yeshayahu 33:7).

Afterwards, He created another creation – a small light called a ‘dark light,’ which is composed entirely of harsh judgments – and this is called the ‘quarry of the *kelipot*,’ from which all the *kelipot* (forces of impurity) emanated.”

It is from this quarry of *kelipot* that the souls of the nations were created as well.

Thus, with these four “quarries,” our world was created – encompassing all of the reality that stands visibly before our eyes.

Thus, the verse that Yirmiyahu cited in the midst of fierce rebuke revealed the greatness and power of the Jewish people.

Before we continue, let us write a few words about the

quarry of kelipot (the realm of impurity)...

The Intermediary Level–Nogah

G-d desired to create a world in which two parallel systems would operate: one of holiness and a second system of impurity.

longer hide Himself, and your eyes will behold your Master”
(Yeshayahu 30:20).

Man constantly stands between these two systems, and by the power of his free will, he must choose the good and reject the evil – and thereby draw the light of G-d into himself and into the world, thereby preparing all of existence for the complete revelation of His light.

But in order for there to be free choice between impurity and holiness, so that man can choose good of his own volition, hastening the days of Moshiach – G-d created a system of impurity – the *quarry of kelipot*.

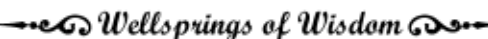
As the Midrash says:⁴ “The Holy One, blessed be He, yearned to have a dwelling place in the lower realms, just as He has in the upper realms” – G-d desired that this lowly world be made into a home for Him where He could be revealed, and this will come to complete fruition in the days of Moshiach, as it is said: “*Your Master will no*

Within the quarry of kelipot, there are thousands of different gradations, but in general, they are divided into two categories:

Absolute evil – which contains no good at all.

Evil mixed with good – which does contain some good.

The prophet Yechezkel saw in his prophetic vision the entire array of evil in both of its general categories, as it is written: “*The word of G-d*



4. Midrash Rabbi Tanchuma (Naso — section 16).

came to Yechezkel son of Buzi the Kohen, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Kevar, and the hand of G-d was upon him there. And I saw, and behold – a storm wind came from the north, a great cloud and a flashing fire, and a brilliance (nogah) was around it; and from within it, like the color of chashmal (electrum) from within the fire” (Yechezkel 1:3–4).

“*Storm wind, great cloud, and flashing fire*” – these refer to the three *kelipot* of the first

type of pure evil, which contain no good at all.

“*And a brilliance (nogah) around it*” – this refers to the second type, which does contain some good. This is the intermediary aspect between the three completely impure *kelipot* and the realm of holiness; *Nogah*, therefore, sometimes is subsumed into the three impure *kelipot* (“*storm wind, great cloud, and flashing fire*”), and sometimes it is subsumed and rises into the realm and level of holiness.

The Holiness of the Jew

On the sixth day of Creation, G-d created man, as it is written: "G-d created man in His image; in the image of G-d He created him; male and female He created them" (Bereshit 1:27).

From the time of his creation, twenty-five generations passed in which the two systems – holiness and impurity – swayed and intermingled. In the twenty-sixth generation, with the Giving of the Torah, they assumed their places: holiness was assigned to every

Jew, and impurity to the nations of the world.

This distinction appeared on three planes:

Number of souls: Every Jew possesses two souls – a *Nefesh Elokit* (divine soul) and a *Nefesh Behemit* (animal soul) – while the nations have only one, an animal soul.

Type of soul: The Gentile’s animal soul draws from the three utterly impure *kelipot*,

containing no good.⁵ The Jew's animal soul draws from *Klipat Nogah*, and thus every Jew possesses inherent good.

Quality of the body: All human flesh is composed of four elements – fire, air, water, and earth (*Esh, Ru'ach, Mayim, Afar* – ARMA). However, the Gentile's body derives from the lower, material aspect of these, whereas the Jew's body is formed from their spiritual essence – the *Yechidah* of the ARMA.

Thus, the flesh of a Jew's body is exceedingly precious to G-d.⁶ At Sinai, impurity departed from Israel: their

bodies were elevated to the *Yechidah* of ARMA, and within them was placed an animal soul from the higher level of *Klipat Nogah*, and more significantly, a *Nefesh Elokit* – a spark of G-d Above. Afterward, G-d commanded Moses to gather the Jewish people and to teach them Parashat Kedoshim.

Thus, man stands between two worlds. Wondrous are the works of G-d;⁷ Creation in general is a great wonder, and man – the crown of creation – is truly the greatest wonder of all. His essence lies in the union of a divine soul, a spark of G-d

— *❧ Wellsprings of Wisdom ❧* —

5. As the Baal HaTanya states (*Likkutei Amarim* — ch. 1):

“By contrast, the souls of the nations of the world are derived from the other impure *kelipot*, in which there is no good at all, as is written in *Etz Chaim* (Sha’ar 49 — ch. 3). And ‘all the good that the nations do, they do for their own sake,’ and as stated in the Gemara (Bava Batra 10b) on the verse, ‘and the kindness of the nations is sin’ (Proverbs 14:34) — that all the charity and kindness that the nations of the

world perform is only in order to aggrandize themselves, etc....”

6. In *Hayom Yom* (29 Elul), it is written that among the sayings of the Baal HaTanya was the following: “We have no concept at all of how precious to the Holy One, blessed be He, the body of a Jew is” (emphasizing the preciousness of the body itself).

7. See the words of Rabbi Yehuda Leib Chasman (*Ohr Yahel*, “Chapters of Thought,” Essay 22).

that perceives truth, together with boundless lowliness and folly that defies reason.

The soul – “the candle of G-d” – was breathed into him by the Creator Himself, imparting His wisdom. This holy spark burns within the heart and awakens a yearning for a higher and holier life of holiness and purity, and if one guards it well, it will not dim. When a Jew follows the stirrings of his soul – pure, eternal, and unsullied – by studying Torah and fulfilling

mitzvot, he draws down divine holiness, sanctifying him.⁸ But if he pursues bodily desires and stumbles in sin, he awakens impurity, which clings and defiles him.

In our parashah, the Torah pleads: follow your divine soul! “And you shall sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am holy” (Vayikra 11:44). As our Sages taught:⁹ “Just as I am holy, so you too be holy; just as I am exalted, so you too must be exalted.”

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

8. To quote the holy Zohar (Tzav, 31a): Rabbi Yosi opened and said: It is written, “And you shall sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy” (Leviticus 20:7). Our Sages expounded (Yoma 39a): “Whoever sanctifies themselves below—by distancing from anything unseemly and by engaging in Torah and good deeds—is sanctified from Above; and whoever defiles themselves below—through various transgressions, or by occupying themselves with heretical books and obscene speech, etc.—is defiled from Above...”

Rabbi Chiya said: This is what we have learned: By the act that a person performs below, an act is aroused Above; if the act

that the person does below is in holiness, holiness is aroused Above, and it comes and rests upon the person, and through it the person is sanctified; and if the person defiles themselves below, a spirit of impurity is aroused Above, and it comes and rests upon them and they become defiled by it, for the matter depends on a person’s deed.

That is to say, each person, according to their actions, arouses and draws down upon themselves—if one occupies oneself with holiness, one draws upon oneself holiness and purity, and if one occupies oneself with impurity, one draws upon oneself impurity...

9. *Sifra* (Parashat Shemini, ch. 12 — sec. 3).

Sanctify Yourself From What is Permitted

In a discourse by my father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel, ZY"A (Imrei Noam, Shemini, Essay 4)—he taught:

“One of the Torah’s commandments is: ‘And you shall sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am holy’ (Vayikra 11:44). Chazal (Torat Kohanim, Shemini 12:3) interpret: ‘Just as I am holy, so you be holy; just as I am exalted, so you be exalted.’

“The Ramban (Vayikra 19:2) infers that since Chazal said ‘be exalted’ without qualification—the Torah commands us to sanctify ourselves even in what is permitted and to abstain from excess. In other words, we must refrain even from what is allowed when it is unnecessary for the service of G-d, as Chazal said (Yevamot 20a): “Sanctify yourself in what is permitted to you.”

“To quote the Ramban: ‘The Torah forbids illicit relations and forbidden foods but permits marital intimacy and the eating

of meat and wine. A person of desire could still indulge—being among guzzlers of wine or gluttonous eaters of meat, and speaking obscenities—since the Torah does not explicitly prohibit this. He would thus be a degenerate with the permission of the Torah. Therefore, after listing specific prohibitions, the Torah issues a general command to be abstinent even from what is permitted.’

Likewise, the Baal HaTanya (Likutei Amarim, ch. 27) says in a similar vein:

"Even in matters completely permissible, whenever a person sacrifices his impulse—even briefly—intending to subdue the sitra achra in the left chamber of his heart (for example, delaying a meal to learn Torah, or restraining his mouth from speaking mundane words he greatly desires), then even a slight bending of the inclination from below elevates the glory and holiness of the Holy One, blessed be He, high Above... in addition to fulfilling the positive commandment, 'And

Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim - Sanctify Yourselves From What is Permitted

you shall sanctify yourselves,' by sanctifying himself in what is permitted."

Elsewhere, the Tanya (ch. 7) explains that worldly matters with no element of prohibition draw vitality from the fourth kelipah, Kelipat Nogah, which mediates between the three impure kelipot and holiness—a mixture of good and evil. When used for the sake of Heaven—eating and sleeping to gain strength for Torah and mitzvot; working to support one's family, raise children to Torah and mitzvot, and give tzedakah—the good within that act is separated from the evil and ascends like an offering, becoming absorbed in holiness.

But when one uses the world merely to gratify bodily desire—gluttonous eating and guzzling wine with no higher intent—the vitality of those acts descends into the impure kelipot until the person returns to Torah and service of G-d.

Accordingly, the Rebbe Rashab said (quoted in HaYom Yom, 27 Shevat): "Chassidim of an

earlier era made a firm pact that any permissible thing toward which their heart felt desire, they would abstain, and through this they broke their ta'avah (lust)." Similarly, the chassid Reb Mordechai of Horodok related (HaYom Yom, 25 Adar II): "The first saying we heard from the Baal HaTanya when we came to Liozna was: 'The forbidden is forbidden—and that which is permitted is unnecessary.' We worked on this for three to four years, integrating it into daily life; only then did we enter into a private audience to seek a path in divine service."

As to the double expression—"and you shall sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy"—Chazal explain (Yoma 39a): "A person sanctifies himself a little, they sanctify him greatly; [if he sanctifies himself] below, they sanctify him Above; [if he sanctifies himself] in this world, they sanctify him in the World to Come."

Thus, "You shall sanctify yourselves" refers to one's own

effort, including abstaining even from permitted things. "You shall be holy" refers to what is bestowed from Above as a reward for that self-sanctification.

In return for the little that a person sanctifies

himself below, the Holy One, blessed be He, sanctifies him greatly from Above—granting abundant assistance in Avodat Hashem, and furthermore, he is made holy and exalted in the World to Come as well.”

The Lurking Dangers of the Kelipot

At Mount Sinai, the two systems of holiness and impurity were clarified, and the system of holiness was placed under the auspices of the people of Israel.

In that moment, the world attained the justification for its creation – and from then on, the power of free will would be actualized, as was G-d’s will in creating the world.

The two systems lined up opposite each other, and the true battle began between the Jew and the forces of impurity that sought to trip him up and weaken him...

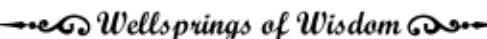
It may sometimes happen that a Jew’s soul falls captive to the

forces of impurity, and they attempt to render it coarse and lowly – like the souls of the nations...

To quote the words of Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Shick, ZY"A:¹⁰

“The soul of every Jewish man and woman is a great and awesome light; it is pure goodness, pure holiness – a part of the World of Atzilut.

Just as when a light shines outside in the darkness, all the creeping things and flies swarm around the light – so too, every Jewish soul is a light within the darkness of exile... and therefore, all the kelipot and the powers of the sitra achra lie in ambush for him, to



Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim - The Lurking Dangers of the Kelipot

bring him down and make him stumble...

If a Jew only knew the greatness of his soul, he would dance all day out of sheer joy – for not having been created a Gentile like the other nations. Even if he merited no other goodness at all, the very fact that his soul is literally a piece of G-d Above is reason enough for him to rejoice in the joy of his Jewishness.”

Alas! The Satan and his destructive forces lie in wait for every Jew to make him forget his true source, which is a piece of G-d Above. The moment a person forgets his source, he may fall into depression, sadness, and bitterness. This may further cause him to deteriorate into every sin in the world, and for his soul to become darkened; life becomes exceedingly miserable and bitter for him, and he remains sunk in inner depression, completely forgetting the sanctity of his Jewish identity.

He may come to a "realization" – that he is the worst person in the world, the most disappointed, humiliated, and sad man alive. He feels full of failures and frustrations, steeped in despair and melancholy, sadness, and depression. Furthermore, being so disappointed in himself causes him to feel that he must be hated! And so he hates himself.

However, the holy Torah declares: “You shall not hate your brother in your heart” (Vayikra 19:17) – it is forbidden to hate a Jew! One who hates another Jew transgresses this prohibition at every single moment.

Likewise, a person must not hate himself; a person must not degrade himself; a person must not speak lashon hara (slander) about himself.

Therefore, one must take hold of himself – and awaken!”

Every Jew is obligated to remember the good within him!

The Indomitable Jewish Spark

As stated above, a Jew has something that no other creature in the world has – a Nefesh Elokit, which is literally a part of G-d Above!

Since this is so, a Jew in truth does not belong under any of the categories of creation. As our Sages taught, all the beings in our lowly world are divided into four levels: inanimate, growing, living, and sentient, and above all of these four levels, there is a fifth reality – the Jew.

A Jew does not belong to the regular classifications of creation – he cannot be categorized under those four levels – because a Jew possesses (in addition to the sentient human soul) a Nefesh Elokit, a part of G-d Above – quite literally. This soul came into being through the Name Havayah (the Tetragrammaton), as the verse explicitly states: “*For G-d’s portion is His people*” (Devarim 32:9).

It is this Nefesh Elokit – this divine soul – that is the *true*

essence of the Jew. It always stands in its purity and high stature, and nothing can ever damage it.

Even when, G-d forbid, a Jew sins, this soul, the spark of Jewishness within him, is not blemished. Even after sinning, he remains a Jew – to be sure, a Jew who has sinned severely, but still a holy Jew!

Moreover, even if a Jew sins intentionally – and furthermore, even if his heart is obtuse and sealed and it seems like he will never repent – he remains a Jew! A Jew who deliberately sins, but a Jew nonetheless! The Nefesh Elokit – the spark of Jewishness within him – burns inside him with a great flame and sacred fire...

Even if the forces of impurity have succeeded in capturing the Jew’s soul, and to all appearances this Jew seems far from any trace of Jewishness, devoid of any holiness at all – even if he projects hatred and alienation

and flaunts his sins... Even if it seems like there are no signs of life left in him, no signs of Jewish identity – the truth is that within him burns a divine fire – the fire of Havayah – of G-d.

As my father, Rabbi Yoram, would often say:

“In the inner depths of every Jew – no matter who it may be – there is a holy and pure divine spark that is not blemished by any sin in the world, but always

retains its holiness,” as Chazal taught (Sanhedrin 44a): *“A Jew, even though he has sinned – is still a Jew.”*

In other words: no sin in the world has the power to blemish the holy spark in a Jew’s inner essence – and therefore a Jew will forever remain a Jew!”

Now, we can proceed to explain the inner purpose and kernel of goodness that is present in divine rebuke...

Highlighting the Good in Everyone

One of the great revelations of our holy master Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, ZY"A, is recorded in the wondrous teaching *Azamra* (*Likutei Moharan* I:282), which teaches how to elevate the kernel of good within rebuke:

“Know that one must judge every person favorably. Even if someone is completely wicked, you must search and find in him some bit of good, where he is not wicked. By finding that bit of good and judging him favorably,

you genuinely elevate him to the side of merit and bring him to teshuvah (repentance).

This is the meaning of: 'And yet a little and there is no wicked one; you will contemplate his place and it is nonexistent' (Psalms 37:10). The verse cautions us to judge everyone favorably. Even if someone appears utterly wicked, nevertheless, you must find the small good point that remains.

For it cannot be that he never once performed a mitzvah or

Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim - True Freedom - The Yoke of Heaven

good deed. And by uncovering that point and judging him favorably, you truly raise him from guilt to merit, until through this he returns in teshuvah. ‘And yet a little and there is no wicked’—by finding in him just a little good, ‘you will contemplate his place and it is nonexistent’—his former state of evil is no longer.”

Thus, one must focus on the divine spark within a person—the pure Jewish point of the soul—that no sin or transgression can harm. For "even though he sinned—he remains a Jew" (Sanhedrin 44a). He may be a Jew with a sin, but he is still a holy Jew. Therefore, there must be good within him—pure and unsullied.

When you concentrate on this good and uncover the

points of Jewishness in him, songs and melodies are aroused, as Rabbi Nachman continues:

“Through this, songs are made... and this is the concept of playing a musical instrument—gathering the good spirit from the gloomy spirit of dejection... ‘I will sing to my G-d be’odi (with my being)’ (Tehillim 104:33)—specifically with my ‘od,’ my ‘more,’ my remaining point of good. Through that, I can sing and give thanks to G-d. This is *azamera*—songs and melodies made by gathering the good points in man...”

By finding good points and weaving them into melodies, the song of redeemed goodness reaches the Jew’s soul and arouses him to repent... until ultimately he comes to complete teshuvah.

True Freedom - The Yoke of Heaven

Now we return to the passage that addresses the wicked son at the Seder night: “*Had he been there, he would not have been redeemed.*”

The wicked son struggles with impurity; his animal soul pulls him toward worldly desires, and he regards serving G-d as a crushing burden. At

times, he wonders: "This is too hard. Perhaps I should abandon it and choose a life free of any yoke." Yet, deep within, the divine spark still burns. He does not wholly turn his back. Indeed, he shows up to the Seder, and in his defiant declaration, "What is this service to you?!" he cries out from the depths that it is hard for him to serve G-d.

At this sacred moment, when hearts are open, we blunt the power of impurity and strengthen holiness, and the father appeals to his son's *seichel* (intellect):

Perhaps you imagine: "If only I had been there in Egypt—with no Torah, no mitzvot, no yoke—I would have been happy." But know this: "Had you been there, you would not have been redeemed." Do not think life without Torah brings joy or satisfaction. In Egypt, the

Israelites were indeed free of mitzvot, yet enslaved with crushing labor. All who refused the yoke of Heaven perished in the plague of Darkness and were not redeemed.

I understand your struggle. Accepting the yoke of Heaven requires constant effort—but it carries sweetness and a pristine and redeeming divine light. The soul is the core of man, and nothing can satisfy its hunger but the fulfillment of Torah and mitzvot. The pleasures of this world only deepen the hunger of the soul. Life "there" would not have brought happiness or redemption.

Therefore, for your own good, take yourself in hand, fix a time for Torah study and for fulfilling the commandments.

Through this, you will merit, even now, in this world, a taste of the World to Come.

Shabbat Shalom!

Summary and Practical Conclusions

Our Sages divided all of the beings in our world into four levels: inanimate, vegetative, animate, and sentient. Above these four levels exists yet another fifth level: the Jew.

The Jew is distinct from all of creation because of the Nefesh Elokit – the divine soul within him that is literally a piece of G-d Above – a soul whose coming into being is through the Name Havayah; as the verse explicitly states: “*For G-d’s portion is His people*” (Devarim 32:9).

This being the case, it is possible for every single Jew to rise and elevate himself and to attain boundless spiritual heights. But this is on the condition that he sanctifies himself, as it is said: “*And you shall sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am holy*” – just as I am holy, so too you shall be holy; just as I am exalted, so must you be exalted.

This verse also contains the good tidings that include both a blessing and a promise: “*and you shall be holy*” – by making yourselves holy and sanctifying yourselves down below, you will merit to become truly holy in your essence. When a person strives to sanctify himself here below to the best of his ability, the Holy One, blessed be He, sends

him great assistance and blesses his efforts from Heaven to add more and more levels of holiness – until he ultimately merits to uproot his evil inclination from within his heart and to become truly “holy.”

Every Jew has a Nefesh Elokit – a part of G-d Above – and therefore he will always remain in his holiness and purity. “*In the inner essence of every Jew, whoever it may be, there is a holy and pure divine spark that is not harmed by any sin in the world, but always remains in its holiness*” – as our Sages have said (Sanhedrin 44a): “*A Jew, even if he has sinned – is still a Jew.*” In other words, no sin in the world has the power to blemish the holy spark in the Jew’s inner being; the Jew’s name will forever remain “Yisrael.”

When we focus on the good that a Jew possesses, and we seek out the spark of the Divine within him, we awaken his soul and give him the strength to return to G-d in teshuvah.

May it be G-d’s will that we merit the coming of Moshiach – whose sacred task will be to focus on the good in every Jew, and by virtue of this trait, he will succeed in bringing the entire people of Israel back in repentance !

Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim - Summary and Practical Conclusions

To quote Rabbi Gedalyahu Rabinowitz, ZY"A (*Teshuot Chen*):
"I received from my teachers that the quality of Moshiach will be that he will be able to find merit in

all of the Jewish people. Through discovering their merits, he will cast thoughts of repentance into everyone's heart, and they will all become righteous..."





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Shabbat Times Acharei-Kedoshim

8th of Iyar ,5786

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	7:27 pm	8:30 pm	8:58 pm
Miami	7:30 pm	8:25 pm	9:01 pm
Los Angeles	7:14 pm	8:12 pm	8:45 pm
Montreal	7:34 pm	8:42 pm	9:06 pm
Toronto	7:54 pm	8:59 pm	9:25 pm
London	7:54 pm	8:59 pm	9:25 pm
Jerusalem	6:59 pm	7:50 pm	8:40 pm
Tel Aviv	6:56 pm	7:48 pm	8:37 pm
Haifa	6:56 pm	7:51 pm	8:40 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:55 pm	7:49 pm	20:38 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of

HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

"Who dwells with them in the midst of their impurity."

(Leviticus 16:16)

"Even a Jew who has fallen to the lowest state still has a divine spark in his heart, and the Holy One, blessed be He, is with him. One must be careful not to belittle any Jew; rather, one should try to draw him close— out of love" (Imrei Noam, Vayikra, p. 174)



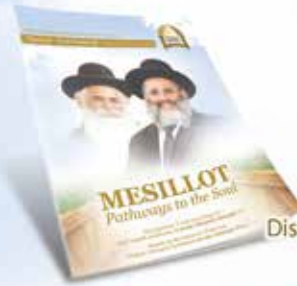
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