



Heavenly Sanctity

Parshas Acharei Mos-Kedoshim

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

The grandson entered the house silently early in the morning, hoping not to awaken his sleeping grandfather. The grandfather, who had undergone a medical procedure on his right hand the day before, and was suffering greatly from the pain. He was released home but warned not to use his hand.

The grandfather -Rabbi Zalman Brizel was known as an early riser, one of Jerusalem's sages, a man who taught me much of the ways of piety. Rabbi Zalman fell the day and broke his hand. He was treated all day due to the severity of his injury and his old age.

Just before he turned in that night, he asked his grandson to wake him the next morning to help him prepare for the morning prayers. When the grandson came he found his grandfather sitting at the table and studying. Why have you awakened? He asked. Rabbi Zalman said that he awoke from the pain. He ritually washed his hands,¹ and it caused him so much pain that he wished to refrain from doing so again, and therefore did not go back to sleep.

The grandson begged his grandfather to go back to bed, but he refused, and asked to be taken to the morning prayers.

In our weekly parsha we read: "And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying, speak to the entire congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, you shall be holy, for I, the Lord, your G-d, am holy."²

The verse begin in a future tense, "you shall be holy" – why not speak in the present tense?

Furthermore, why does the verse relate to "the entire congregation?" We know there are various levels of holiness, how can we speak to everyone in the same way?

Rashi explains: "Separate yourselves from sexual immorality and from sin, for wherever one finds a barrier against sexual immorality, one finds holiness." One may claim that this has nothing to do with holiness. Therefore, he is told to distance himself from sin, more than he is obligated to. When he does that, he inadvertently attains holiness.

One is measured and judged by ones efforts. When a person refrains from evil he comes closer to G-d. The Baal Shem Tov teaches us that when one disconnects from G-d it is if he is worshipping idols. On the other hand, one who steps away from the profane comes closer to G-d. If one desires to attain a level of holiness – it all depends on his actions.

Our Sages teach us that one who works to attain a bit of holiness, receives much more. Why is a person awarded in accordance with

his actions in other Mitzvos, and here his award is greater than his effort? In the realms of sanctity, when one stays away from the negative he automatically becomes sanctified, and therefore he receives assistance from above. One must make the first step on his own – to refrain from sin.

The previous verse states: "And you shall observe My charge, not to commit any of the abominable practices that were done before you, and you shall not become defiled by them. I am the Lord your G-d,"³ and subsequently, one is commanded: "you shall be holy" – this teaches us that if one stays away from "abominable practices" he "shall be holy."

After the long night of prayer and learning, Rabbi Zalman told his grandson a story with a message:

After Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhansk passed away, two of his disciples decide to visit his brother Zushya of Anipoli. One day, as they were one the road, they were forced to spend the night in the woods, for they could not find any shelter.

They realized that they had no water to immerse their hands after they slept. One of the disciples suggested that they not sleep at all. The other said that they were exempt from the ritual, as they had no other option.

One slept on the floor, as the other paced back and forth to keep himself awake. In the morning they continued their journey.

When they arrived at Rabbi Zushya, he berated the man who slept: "How can you call yourself a Hassid? All the levels of spirituality you have attained were all lost in that one night of sleep."

The man went silent. He then begged Rabbi Zushya to help him get back all he had lost. Rabbi Zushya smiled understandingly.

"Do you understand?" Rabbi Zalman addressed his grandson, "they had achieved real profound spiritual 'levels' and had great rabbis to help them if they lost them. What do I have? If I do not care for myself no one will be able to save me. I must do my utmost to preserve the spiritual levels I have attained."

When they arrived together at the synagogue, Rabbi Zalman said gleefully: "Do you know what I have - a spiritual award for walking with you to the synagogue. No one can take that away from me."

He entered the study hall and forgot his aches and pains, and turned to his holy prayers.

¹ *Netilat Yadayim*, washing of hands when one wakes from his sleep, pouring water out from a vessel three times, intermittently, over each hand. This washing is said to remove an evil spirit from one's fingers

² Vayikra 19: 1-2.

³ Vayikra 18:30.