

PARSHAS EMOR

תשפ"ד

The parsha begins and ends with a very important lesson.

It begins with "Emor v'omartoh" – why the duplication? Chazal tell us that it means the adults have to make sure the minors maintain their kedushas kehunoh and not become tomei meis.

In general, the mitzvah of chinuch we are familiar with – that children actually have to perform mitzvos before the age of bar mitzvah – is a din derabbonon. Without this din, the parents would still have to ensure that when their child reaches the age of chiyuv mitzvos, they will already be motivated and they will know how to keep the Torah. That is a chiyuv de'oraisoh. But the mitzvah derabbonon is to actually train a child to practice doing all the mitzvos. Knowledge of what the Torah will require of them when they mature is not enough. This chiyuv derabbonon requires the child to perform each mitzvah exactly as an adult would perform it in order to be yotzeh.

But there are three places we find that the Torah itself requires that adults must prevent children from violating certain aveiros as minors. One place is chillul Shabbos – the Torah says *לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה קָל חִלְאֵיךָ אֵתָהּ* and it is clearly referring to minors. It is not enough just to motivate them and educate them about keeping Shabbos. They have to actually be prevented from doing melachos. The other is eating non-kosher food, and the third is in this week's parsha about kedushas kehunoh. It is a chiyuv chinuch de'oraisoh that adult kohanim have to ensure junior kohanim maintain their kedushas kehunoh and not become tomei.

The Rambam saw a connection between these three mitzvos chinuch de'oraisoh – they are aimed at training the child in living a life of kedushoh. Interestingly, he quotes the posuk in Mishlei: *חֲנוּךְ לְנַעַר*. על פי דרכו. It is not enough just to educate them and motivate them. Kedushoh is an entire way of life. You need to set your children on this path of actually living a life of kedushoh while they are young. This will establish the pattern for the rest of their lives – to live like a Jew. As we read at the end of last week's parsha, *וּמֵאֲבֵדִיל אֶתְכֶם מִן הָעַמִּים לְהִיּוֹת לִי*, Hashem set us aside from all the other nations in order to live a life of kedushoh.

The Rambam subsumes the halachos of issurei biah, shechitoh, and non-kosher food under the sefer called Kedushoh. In all these areas of kedushoh, a father has to set his children on this path. Kedushas Shabbos, kedushas achiloh, kedushas kehunoh, and kedushoh in the area of arayos. It establishes a certain pattern of an elevated way of life.

We live in a physical world, but we are spiritual beings. Hashem is instructing us to live a life of ruchniyus by bringing ruchniyus into all our physical activities. We cannot live to eat and drink and indulge in physical pleasures. High quality alcohol is a mageifoh among frum Jews today. They spend hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars on a single bottle of wine or whiskey! This is what people are proud of! Their priorities are significantly skewed and this gets passed down to their children. 'Kedoshim tihyu' tells us that we orient our goals to be spiritual goals, and our lives as spiritual lives. The Torah itself tells us we begin training our children from an early age for a life of kedushoh.

The Rambam had a deep understanding of human behavior and he tells us how people change in subtle ways. In Hilchos Teshuvoh he says we have bechiroh chofshis to change our bad habits and behaviors. But this doesn't mean you transform all your bad behavior overnight. The first step is to begin moving in a different direction. You develop tools and training to enable serious changes in your life to occur over

time until you eventually reprogram your life. That is teshuvoh – *עֲזֹב* רשע דרכו. You change the path of life you are on – from a life without restrictions to a life of discipline and restrictions.

This is the mitzvah of chinuch – to program our children in this direction in life. In order to be a holy nation and establish a deep connection to Hashem. We have to adopt a whole new way of life – one of restraints and discipline. We are Hashem's representatives in this world and there is a whole different level of living that we strive for.

Then at the end of the parsha, we have another important lesson in the form of an unusual story. A man born of a Jewish woman and an Egyptian man – which was completely unique in all of Klal Yisroel's history in Egypt – claims he has a right to live in the camp of his mother's shevet. He loses the case. In frustration at losing the case, he curses the Name of Hashem.

The Torah tells us the name of his mother – Shlomis bas Divri. She was very friendly and constantly greeted people. What is the problem with being a friendly person? The midrash says the task master of Shlomis' husband dragged him off to work early in the morning and Shlomis was friendly with him as well. He sensed from her friendly demeanor, that this woman was open to forming a more intimate relationship with him and he ultimately seduced her and had this child with her.

There is a mishna in Pirkei Ovos which warns us against forming close relationships with resh'o'im. There are two kinds of relationships that people can forge with one another. One kind is a functional relationship – sticking to the business at hand and not getting personal. And the other is personal.

A practical, functional relationship is like your relationship to the person at the checkout counter when you pay for your groceries in the grocery store. You are polite and say hello, pay the bill, and say thank you, and you are on your way out. There is no personal connection. Then there is a relationship where you try to establish a personal connection by finding something to share – a common interest or a common value. So now we understand the mishna – how can you make a personal relationship with a rosho? You don't have common interests or common values to share with him!

The Rambam in Pirush Mishnayos says there is deep reason why a ger is considered like a *שְׂטוּל*. The halacha is that all his previous close family relationships cease to exist. He isn't related to them anymore once he converts. Why? The Rambam says being a Jew – and feeling that the identity of being a Jew is the core of your being – means there is no common ground that you share with non-Jews. The difference in religion makes you worlds apart – an unbridgeable gap. Even if they are your family members who raised you from infancy. Once you convert, you have no common ground with them – there is nothing you share.

So Chazal warn us to be careful about forming personal relationships with people who you should not share any common interests and values with. It is natural to want to be liked by other people, and you subconsciously try to find ways to connect with them. But the Torah warns us to define certain relationships between people as strictly functional and not personal.

This son born of a Jewish woman and Egyptian father wanted to belong to his mother's shevet, but he was rejected. The camps of the shevotim are comprised of descendants of the paternal line only. So this man

was forced to live with all the rejected people who didn't belong to any particular shevet – somewhere off to the side of the machaneh. It is unfortunate, but this is the price of guarding the purity of Klal Yisroel. Znus cannot be tolerated, and the products of znus cannot be integrated and accepted by the community.

This man could not accept this rejection, so in his anger, he cursed the Name of Hashem. But what does that really mean? How can mere human beings cause any kind of misfortune or inflict any kind of harm on Hashem with a curse?

Those who are familiar with Nefesh HaChaim understand that the concept of brochoh – to be mevorech Hashem – is the ability of the human being to cause an increase of Hashem's presence in this world through his tefillos and brochos. So cursing Hashem does the opposite – wishing that Hashem's dominance in this world should decrease and be diminished. This man resented the fact that Hashem's will – to guard Klal Yisroel against arayos – was over-dominating his life and blocking his ability to belong to his mother's shevet. That made him a megadef and he is punished by death.

Kedushoh requires chinuch from a very early age – and it is a mitzvah de'oraisoh. Whether it is kedushas hazman like Shabbos, or kedushas haguf like kehunoh, food and arayos. We live in a physical world with

a physical body, and we use it to serve Hashem.

The Ramban in Toras Hashem Temimoh asks a question. Why does the Torah have all these mitzvos that need to be performed with our body? He answers that an animal is purely physical and has no relationship with Hashem. A maloch is purely spiritual and has no struggle to connect to Hashem because he is on a totally spiritual plane. A human being is both physical and spiritual and needs to connect to Hashem by merging the physical with the spiritual – through maaseh mitzvos using his body. A violation of that kedushoh has the most serious consequences. The idea of kedushoh was violated by Shlomis bas Divri because she forged relationships with people she should not be relating to. And the product of that violation produces tragedy. This child felt separated from his shevet, and he resented that Hashem's presence was interfering with his happiness, so he wished to limit Hashem's presence. He didn't appreciate that there have to be limits in our relationships between Jews and non-Jews, between men and women in order to preserve our kedushoh.

Everything we learn here in Parshas Kedoshim and Emor is telling us we are different and we have to be very careful about our relationships in order to preserve our kedushoh. These parshiyos end with the story of the disaster that results from those who do not appreciate the value of being trained in a lifestyle of kedushoh.