

# תורה מציון Torah MiTzion

RELIGIOUS ZIONIST KOLLELS כוללים ציוניים בתפוצות

## Shabbat Shalom from Torah MiTzion

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## A Life of kdusha

by Rav Shlomo Sobol, former Rosh Kollel, Detroit

Parashat Kedoshim is filled with tens of Mitzvot that Moshe passes on to Bnei Yisrael. The unifying theme of all these Mitzvot is "you shall be holy". Holiness, the Torah teaches us, is achieved through the observance of Mitzvot.

There is one Mitzva of the 613 Mitzvot, which more than all the others symbolizes holiness: the Mitzva of Kiddush HaShem, the sacrifice of life for the sanctification of God's name. Yet this Mitzva of "And I will be sanctified among the People of Israel", does not appear in this week's Parasha, but in next week's Parasha (VaYikra 22:32).

Wouldn't it be more appropriate for this particular Mitzva to appear in this week's Parasha with its heading of Kedoshim?

It appears that the Torah is attempting to teach us a lesson in true holiness according to Judaism. Holiness, from Judaism's perspective, does not entail removing oneself from worldly pursuits and life itself. True, we are willing to sacrifice ourselves for the core values of our belief, because we understand that life itself has value only when it expresses the divine aspects of life. So when a Jew is asked to deny the Divine content in his life, he is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice and thereby sanctify God's name.

Yet, this is a painful reality that is far from the ideal to which we strive and negates the goals for which we live. This sacrificing of a life is not the ideal expression of holiness and therefore its place is not in our Parasha with its many living examples of holiness.

Parashat Kedoshim describes holiness in its most basic and primal form. Holiness that is revealed in life itself. A life of everyday events connected each moment to the Creator of the World. These banal, routine aspects of life give the greatest expression to holiness. Through these moments, Man reveals his connection to Hashem. Even the simplest activities of existence are part of serving Hashem.

This explains why our Parahasa opens with the Mitzva of respect for ones parents. The relationship with ones' parents, with whom one lives twenty four hours a day, who constantly push for excellence in all aspects of life, is the truest test of the level of holiness one has attained.

Yehi Ratzon - May we merit to sanctify our lives in every moment of our lives.

### **Rabbi Akiva (Eruvin 21b)**

#### **Howard Jackson**

When Rabbi Akiva was in prison [1] Rabbi Yehoshua HaGarsi was permitted to wait on him. Every day they would bring to Rabbi Akiva a measured amount of water. One day, the jailer encountered Rabbi Yehoshua and said to him: "You have too much water today. Perhaps you need it to dig out of the prison?"

The jailer spilled out half the water and gave him the other half. When he came to Rabbi Akiva, he said to him: "Yehoshua, don't you know that I am old and my life depends on your life?"

He then related to him the whole incident. Rabbi Akiva said: "Give me water so that I can wash my hands (before eating bread)."

Rabbi Yehoshua replied: "There isn't even enough water to drink; is there enough for you to spare to wash your hands?"

Rabbi Akiva responded: "What can I do? The Rabbinic laws carry the death penalty! It is better that I die a death caused by myself by not drinking enough rather than transgress the will of my colleagues."

It is said that Rabbi Akiva tasted nothing until he brought him water and he washed his hands. When the sages heard of this they remarked: "If in his old age he is like this, how much more so must he have been in his youth [2]; and if in prison he is like this, how much more so must he have been when not in prison." (*Gemara Eruvin 21b*)

*Rambam* famously rules [3] that in a situation where *Halachah* permits one to violate the *Torah* rather than sacrifice his life, *Halachah* in fact demands that he violate the *Torah*. Whenever *Halachah* does not mandate surrendering one's life, one has the obligation to save his life, even if this entails violating the *Torah*. Surely this principle would apply all the more so to transgressing Rabbinic laws, so why do the sages praise Rabbi Akiva's conduct?

*Nimukei Yosef (Sanhedrin 18a)* claims that although the *Rambam* forbids martyrdom when *Halachah* does not require it, a prominent, righteous Jew may give his life if he sees that the people of his time are disloyal to the *Torah* and he seeks to impress upon them the importance of *Mitzvot*. In such a situation, even if *Halachah* does not mandate martyrdom to avoid violating the given transgression, the righteous leader may, indeed, surrender his life in the sanctification of God's name.[4]

Alternatively, *MaHaritz Chayot* answers that if Rabbi Akiva's life had been in certain danger then it would have been forbidden for him to behave strictly. The situation described in our *Gemara* was not one of certain danger though, because it was quite plausible [5] that more water would be brought, as was indeed the case.

Notes:

Rabbi Akiva was imprisoned by the Romans for teaching Torah in public.

How can this statement be reconciled with Avot d'Rabbi Natan 6:2 which states that Rabbi Akiva was ignorant until the age of forty? We could suggest that our phrase "in his youth" refers to his forties.

Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 5:4

Rav Shmuel Eliezerov cites this Nimukei Yosef to justify the actions of Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah, referenced in Gemara Pesachim 53b.

Apparently, Rabbi Akiva was aware that he was a high profile prisoner whom the Romans would not want to die of thirst.

### **Family Learning: Parshat Acharei Mot Kedoshim**

**Bluma Zalcmán**

1. Who is the only person allowed to enter the Kodosh Hakedoshim and when is he allowed to enter?
2. What was written on the lots that were drawn for the two goats?
3. Why didn't the Kohen Hagadol wear any garments that had gold on them on Yom Kippur?
4. What are the names of the three mitzvot to leave part of a harvest for poor people?
5. What is the exception to the issur of not cursing anyone?

*Answers follow below*

### **Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau**

Rabbi Lau was born in 1937 to Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lau in 1937 in the small Polish town of Pietrikov. His father, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lau, the last chief Rabbi of Pietrikov, perished in the Treblinka death camp and his mother in the Ravensbruck death camp.

*"I was taken to Buchenwald by my brother inside a knapsack, for it was a camp for men, not for children. My brother took me there after he snatched me from a train that was going to Bergen Belsen so as not to leave me alone.*

*In Buchenwald we were first in Block ,66 where Jews were kept. Conditions there were infernal. A Polish doctor, himself a prisoner, took pity on me and cut the letter" P "from a corpse of a Polish prisoner and sewed it on my clothes; thus I was transferred as a Polish child to Block 8, where Russian prisoners were kept, near the gate of the camp. There, conditions were much better. I met a Russian officer named Fiodor who took care of me like a son and made sure I ate cereal or potato soup every day.*

*My story ends in Buchenwald on January 9, 1945; then I arrived with my brother, who was saved in spite of everything, in Eretz Israel, where I was born again".*

Rabbi Lau, was a survivor of the Buchenwald camp, and being all but five years old, he was also the youngest survivor. The only other family member who survived the war was his brother Naphtali, who was with him in Buchenwald, and an uncle and aunt who were already living in Israel.

After the war, Naphtali and Rabbi Lau made their way to Israel and lived with their aunt and uncle in Kiryat Mutzkin. In Israel, they found out that they had a half brother also living in Israel named Yehoshua .Rabbi Lau studied in a Talmud Torah in Jerusalem, then Zichron Ya'akov, then in Bnei Brak. Afterwards he married the daughter of the former chief rabbi of Tel Aviv .

In 1971, Rabbi Lau got his smicha, and became the Rabbi of Ohr Torah congregation in Tel Aviv. That same year he was appointed the rabbi of the Northern Tel Aviv area. In 1979, he was chosen as the chief Rabbi of Netanya and in 1983 he became a member of the Rabbinical Council where he was a part of the committee for Medical Ethics.

In 1988, he returned once again to Tel Aviv to preside as Chief Rabbi and head of the Rabbinical Court of Tel Aviv- Yaffo. However, he left that position in 1993 when he was chosen as the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel. With his appointment as chief Rabbi, he fulfilled his father's last wish: that one of his sons continues the family's dynasty to become a Rabbi.

After his term as Chief Rabbi, he was reinstated as the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, where he is now .

Rabbi Lau has been characterized as the" consensus Rabbi ,"on account of his close ties with the Charedi and Modern Orthodox) Dati- Leumi) communities. He has been called a "moderate Zionist ,"but" to Zionist to be considered Charedi ."He is much respected by Jews and non-Jews alike, internationally and is one of the few people that has gained the trust of both the Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities.

Rabbi Lau was presented with the Israel Prize in 2005, for his part in" bridging rifts in Israeli society ".He also has several publications" :Yahadut- Halacha l'Ma'aseh ,"about Judaism in the daily life, two volumes of" Yachel Yisrael ,"on medicine, and ethics, and an auto biography" Al Tishlach Yadchah La'Na'ar ."

**Torah MiTzion** establishes Religious Zionist Kollels (centers of Jewish learning and outreach) in Diaspora Jewish communities to strengthen the study of Torah, Jewish identity, the unity of the Jewish people, and the connection between Torah study and Israel .

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**Answers:Family Learning**

1 (Kohen Gadol, on Yom Kippur

2 (Lashem, Lazazel

3 (Gold would remind Hashem about the Golden Calf, and we don't want Hashem to remember our sins, we want him to remember our merits.

4 (Leket, Shichicha, Peia

5 (Rishaim gmurim