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SEFER VAYIKRA - THE PENSON FAMILY EDITION

FOR THE REFUAH SHLEIMA OF RIVKA BAS SHOSHANA

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Emulating Him

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פרשת אחרי - קדושים

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Emulating Him

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Part I. Desire to Emulate

The Mitzvah

One of the most important commands that Hakodosh Boruch Hu ever told us in the Torah is found in this week's *parsha*; only that because it comes right away in the beginning of the *sedrah* so by the time we find the place in the *chumash* the *baal korei* is already *laining* and we missed the whole thing – we hear the words quickly as they speed by and we don't have time to reflect on it.

What is this great *mitzvah* that we're talking about? *Kedoshim tihyu!* You should make yourselves holy! That's how our *parsha* begins, with Hashem making a demand of the Am Yisroel: "I want you all to get busy becoming *kedoshim*."

Now the first question we have to answer is what is this holiness that Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants from us? So you might have your own

ideas – you think maybe you should buy a more expensive *shtreimel* or a more expensive Shabbos *kapoteh*. Ok, I won't say there's anything wrong with that – *kavod Shabbos* is wonderful, no question about it. But that's not *kedusha*; Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants something more than that.

Kedoshim tihyu means, “You should make yourselves perfect.” That's how the Seforno explains our *possuk*: *Sheleimim tehiyu* – You should become perfect people. In a nutshell that's what *kedusha* is; it's perfection of character, of behavior, of the mind – that's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants from us. That's our purpose in life.

The Reason

And why should we be *kadosh*? So Hakodosh Boruch Hu gives us a reason right away: *Kedoshim tihyu, ki kadosh ani Hashem* – You should make yourselves holy because I am holy. That's the reason given for this command. “I'm holy,” says Hashem, “so I expect you to be holy too.”

Now, to us a *peirush* on that reason is necessary. Just because You, Hashem, are *kadosh*, how is that an explanation for why we have to become *kadosh*? You're *Elokim*, You're Hashem – of course You're *kadosh*; of course You're perfect! What's that have to do with us?!

But to the minds of the *kadmonim* who read these words, this reason was entirely understandable. Because if Hashem is *kadosh* then naturally you have a yearning to be that way too. It's an instinct – if Hakodosh Boruch Hu has a certain *middah*, then everybody aspires to that *middah*. And if He has an entire set of *middos*, then we aspire to that too.

Emulating Royalty

I'll give a *mashal*, although it's a very poor *mashal*. When a man in England wanted to sell a certain kind of a necktie on the market, so what did he do? He tried his best to get close to the royal chamberlain, the one in charge of the king's wardrobe, and he would prevail on him that the king should wear that kind of a necktie; the king should go out in public wearing his tie – once that happened this necktie manufacturer was already a success in the world. Why? Because when the king appeared in public with that kind of a necktie, all the Englishmen began wearing that necktie. If the king is wearing such a tie, instinctively everyone wants the same tie.

That's why even today in England you'll find royal hatters, people who sell hats to the king. It's a select group of people who have this distinction – and it's a very valuable distinction to have because once the king wears your product then all of the men in England will want to wear that same hat. The same is if you can convince the queen's milliner to use your hat for the royal wardrobe – you're set now because that hat will be the most popular one for the next few years. And that's because everybody wants to be identified with royalty, with greatness – it's considered an honor to wear such a hat or such a necktie because you're identifying with the king.

And so we come back to our *possuk* now: “Why should you spend your days making yourselves perfect? Because I am perfect.” That's the *ta'am* of the *mitzvah* – no more explanations are needed. “Be like Me!” says Hashem.

Now, that's already something to strive for! To emulate the king of England, OK, that's something. It's not much but at least it's better than emulating a bum on the streets of London. But to become perfect like Hakodosh Boruch Hu?! That's already worth living for!

Tempting the Pure

That's why when Adam and his wife were in Gan Eden, and they were approached by the *nachash* with a very great temptation, it wasn't merely the appearance of the beautiful fruits that were so tempting; it wasn't even the hope to gain knowledge from the *eitz hada'as* that tempted them. Of course, there's no question that every factor participated – a more beautiful fruit is certainly more difficult to resist and when that fruit is also expected to confer a special knowledge, that certainly added to the trial that these great personalities were undergoing.

But that was only a small part of the *nisayon*. The crux of the test was what the *nachash* said, “*V'heyisem ke'Elokim* – you'll be like Hashem.” Ooh, to be like Hashem! That was the very greatest temptation for the purest of all minds.

Now, it could be that today we are not impressed by such a lure to be like Elokim – we don't have such a strong *emunah* in Elokim altogether; we keep the Torah and do *mitzvos* but an actual awareness of Elokim is very, very far away from our minds. Adam Harishon and Chava, however, they understood Elokim as the reality of all realities – there was nothing

more real to them – and therefore when Chava was approached by the *nachash* with the proposal of “You’ll be like Elokim,” that was the greatest of all their aspirations.

Your Great Neshama

Of course, it doesn’t mean you’ll be Elokim; nobody could be the same, but you’ll be *something* like Elokim. And that was the greatest of all temptations – nothing was desired more dearly by them because when you’re aware of Something so tremendously great, so infinitely perfect, that’s who you want to be like. For the purest of *neshamos* that’s the greatest desire, to become like the best.

That’s why, when we study a little bit of the *sifrei kabbalah* we realize that the Jewish *neshama* – I’m talking about *neshama kedosha* that lives according to the *dvar Hashem* – is endlessly great. If we could look into the profundity of the Jewish *neshama* and realize to what heights it can rise, we’d understand right away why one of the outstanding Torah attitudes on living life successfully is the great principle of “Be perfect because I, Hashem your G-d, is perfect.”

Making Him Real

Now, like I mentioned before, in this day and age such an idea is extremely remote from our minds. To resemble Hashem?! Even if we’ll give ourselves the credit of being *maaminim* – we believe in Hashem implicitly – but still the concept of imitating Hashem seems so impractical, so unrealistic to our Brooklyn minds or to our Los Angeles minds! And that’s because we have a very abstract picture of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He’s an idea – at best He’s a word in the siddur.

Like the Navi Yeshayah said, *Karov atah befihem* – You are near to them in their mouths, *v’rachok meikilyoseihem* – but You’re far away from their insides. It means you talk about Him but you don’t think about Him too much. That’s the straight truth; to think about Hakodosh Boruch Hu is a *chiddush* to most people. Tell me the truth; during the day, how many times did you stop to meditate on Hashem? Unfortunately, we have to admit that we, the *frummeh*, are remiss in thinking about Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

But now we’re learning not only do we have to do that, but we have to have a picture of Hakodosh Boruch Hu in our mind’s eye – a *real* picture – so that we should have what to emulate.

The Anthropomorphic Problem

With this the Rambam explains a big difficulty everywhere in the Torah. You know, in his Moreh Nevuchim the Rambam tries very hard to explain away any anthropomorphisms, any expressions of *gashmiyus* about Hashem. 'Anthropo' means men and 'morphism' means shapes, men-shapes, and the Torah is full of anthropomorphic descriptions of Hashem. He has a *yad chazaka*, a strong hand and an *ayin ro'eh*, eyes that see everything. That's how He's described in the Torah – with human traits.

Now the Rambam is very bothered by that – he says it's *minus*, it's heresy, to say such things. How could you speak of Hashem and say He has eyes and He has hands?! You're taking Hakodosh Boruch Hu who is supremely sublime above all physical concepts and you're making out of Him an object of flesh and blood, of chemicals, of things that could dissipate into dust?!

And even such expressions like *yismach Hashem bema'asav*, Hashem rejoices, are difficult to understand. Hashem doesn't rejoice. Rejoicing is a matter of nerves and a change in certain mental attitudes. Hakadosh Baruch Hu has no changes. He's always perfect; the most we can say about Him is that He's *kulo chochma*; He's perfect wisdom.

And therefore a very big question presents itself. Why was all this necessary? Why didn't Hakodosh Boruch Hu use some sublime expressions instead of telling us about Hashem's hands and His eyes, about His rejoicing and His anger?

Don't Speak in Abstractions

The Rambam answers that the Torah speaks this way about Hashem *lesaber es haozen*, so that the ear will understand. *Lesaber* is from the word *sevarah*; to give a *sevarah* that the ear can hear. It means this: We are human beings and it is difficult for us to grasp abstractionism.

Let's say you want to be a public speaker. So one of the great teachers of public speaking once wrote a book and he said that if you want your audience to fall asleep on you so speak in abstractions. Abstract ideas are difficult to keep your mind on it and after a while your attention wanders and you fall asleep. Talk about abstract ideas, concepts that are far from the mind, and they'll be sleeping in no time.

You want people to listen to you? Speak about things that are actual objects. Speak especially about people. Do that and you'll get their interest because people are interested in people. They can picture people because it's like themselves.

And that, the Rambam says, is one of the reasons why Hakodosh Boruch Hu is depicted in the Torah with such detail, with so many different attributes. Because we need a 'picture' of Hashem if we're going to emulate Him. If in our eyes He's only an abstraction, a cloud of glory, so nobody can emulate a cloud of glory. It's only when we speak about Hakodosh Boruch Hu as a Being with attributes; a Being of endless perfection with the attributes that our limited minds can grasp, only then He can be our model. The more we have a picture of Hakodosh Boruch Hu as the Perfect Personality, the more we can emulate His ways and fulfill the mitzvah of *kedoshim tihyu*.

Part II. Ways of Emulation

Seeing Hashem's Ways

We're learning now that one of the great functions of our lives is to look at all times with our eyes to Hakodosh Boruch Hu with the intention of studying His ways. When you look in the *Tanach* or in the words of the *chachomim* you have to look with a purpose, with a certain *kavanah* — "I want to see the ways of Hashem in order to emulate them." And if you look, you'll find. The Torah is full of His perfect ways, His perfect attributes, and once you put your mind to it, you'll see a great many opportunities to emulate Him.

I'll give you an example, just a random example from my little head. Everyone knows that Hashem is *ohev amo Yisroel*. You don't have to be a big *lamdan* to know that Hashem loves every *frum* Jew with an intense love; it's one of the principles that's repeated again and again in the Torah. The man sitting next to you in the shul, your neighbor who gets on your nerves sometimes, Hashem loves him even more than a parent loves a child. His mother loves him too but it's nothing like Hashem loves him; nothing like it. That's something we know from the *pesukim*.

Ahavas Yisroel

But we're learning now that it's not just information to know – it's a *middah* of Hashem, a perfection of His Perfect Personality *k'viyachol* that we're expected to imitate. That's why it's a good idea, once in a while, to take a moment or two to remind yourself about this fiery love, "*rishfeha rishfei eish*" like coals of fire, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu has for each and every *frum* Jew. "If He's an *oheiv Yisroel* – actually He's the *oheiv Yisroel* par excellence – then that's what I want to be too."

It's actually not so difficult to love Jews; what a beautiful people the *frumme* Jews are – there's nobody like the *frumme* Jews! Who comes to learn? Who supports so many Torah institutions? Who sees that their children go *b'derech hayashar* like the *frum* Jews? How much money they spend on tuition! And their homes are a *Beis Hamikdosh* – kosher, pareve, milchigs, fleishigs! It's a very big job to keep kosher! And it costs money too! *Kashrus* cost money. On *Shabbos*, they don't do anything! A holy nation! *Am kadosh*!

You have to learn to love them for that! It takes work but it's worth all the effort because the more you do it, the more you are like Hashem. And even if you would emulate Him just a little bit and love your fellow Jew a little, just a little bit of sincere affection, then you're already quite a success – you're already a *kadosh*. And the more you do it, the more perfect you become.

Stop the Chit Chat

Another example: Don't talk so much! You know that Hashem doesn't babble. He doesn't waste words – every word in the Torah is measured to perfection. And so *kedoshim tihiyu* means: don't talk so much! Did you ever think about that? Maybe you talk too much! So why don't you get busy emulating Hashem and watching your words? Oooh, that's important! It's a *kedusha* of character to not talk too much.

So let's say you're a lady on the telephone and you've been talking now for a long while already. So why don't you tell yourself, "Maybe I shouldn't talk so much on the telephone. I should fulfill the mitzvah of *kedoshim tihiyu* now and hang up the phone." Of course, don't tell that to your friend on the phone. Tell her the food is burning on the stove and you have to run, or make some other excuse, but in your head you're thinking about emulating Hashem.

Or maybe you're sitting at the Shabbos *seudah* and everybody's talking; everyone has something to say and you want to add in your two cents. But then you remind yourself: "Kedoshim tihiyu! Hashem doesn't open His mouth to speak unless it's needed so I'm going to be like Him." Maybe not for the entire *seudah*, but why not try it for five minutes? Not only is it a *mitzvah d'oraisah* but it's a *kedusha*; it's a perfection of character.

Chatting the Right Way

Now, let's say you *do* want to open your mouth; it's not easy keeping your mouth closed for so long and so you want to say something – so you can emulate Hakodosh Boruch Hu when you do that too.

You remember what happened at *ma'aseh bereishis*? וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה טוֹב מְאֹד – Hashem saw everything that He made and He said that it's *tov me'od*. What is He talking about there? *Olam Haboh*? No! It's talking about what it says in the *chumash*, תִּדְרֹשׂא הָאָרֶץ תּוֹצִיא הָאָרֶץ, plants, animals, fish, birds. The sun and the moon and the clouds and the air. It's all *tov me'od*.

Now, why did He have to say that? You think He had to take a look, to see if He approved of what He created?! If He made it; of course it's good. So we come back to the words of the Rambam we quoted earlier – *Hakodosh Boruch Hu said these words because He wants us to say the same words. We should emulate Him and say tov me'od about the world.*

The Good World

It's hot? Wonderful! The apples are getting red on the trees. The pears are becoming sweet on the trees. If it wasn't hot, they wouldn't become sweet. And if it's cold, that's also wonderful. Cold forces the earth to stop producing. The earth now is taking a rest from producing and while it's resting, it's recuperating all the minerals, all the materials it lost during the summertime. Without the winter, there can't be a summer. If it was summer all year, the earth would keep on producing and it would become arid and infertile. That's why the earth takes a vacation in the wintertime. So when it gets cold, be like Hashem and say, "Ahh! Wonderful! Cold is very good!"

Rain is wonderful. Without rain, we're nothing. You know, we're 80% rain. It means that when it rains, we're coming down from the sky. And therefore when rain comes down, all the boys of the *yeshivos* are

coming down. And their future brides, the *kallos* from Bais Yaakov, are also coming down. They're all coming down together from the sky. We all came down in the rain once upon a time! And people are grouching and complaining about the rain. Here we were coming down from the clouds and they were complaining against us! That's our chance to come to this world! So rain is *tov me'od!* Don't forget to say that the next time it rains!

And so we begin to understand that one function of *kedoshim tihiyu* is that we should gain an attitude that this is a good world. Hashem says it's a very good world, and that means He wants us to keep on saying it all the time. That's part of the perfection of emulating the perfection of Hashem, to look around at the world and say it's very very good. All our lives, we have to say "Ribono Shel Olam, we congratulate You! You did an excellent job! *Tov me'od!*"

Studying Tomer Devorah

Now, there's a famous *sefer* written about four hundred years ago by a great *mekubal* Rav Moshe Cordevero; a little *sefer* called *Tomer Devorah*. And there he says that everyone is expected to study the ways of Hashem and to try and imitate them. That's what he says there and that's what we're talking about now; *Kedoshim tihiyu* – you should resemble Hashem.

The *Tomer Devorah* there quotes from a *possuk* in Micha which describes some of the *middos* of Hashem; it's worth making the time to study the *Tomer Devorah* even if it's just to get a glimpse of the greatness that is expected from the Jewish people. The words of that little *sefer* have already entered the bloodstream of the Jewish people – you may not be aware of it, but these *middos*, the way they have been explained in the *Tomer Devorah*, have become our national possession and the ideal to which we strive.

Now, we're not going to be able to study all the examples he brings; that would take many many lectures – but at least we'll make an attempt to talk about one *middah* as explained in the *Tomer Devorah*, the first one in the *possuk*.

Tremendous Tolerance

Micha Hanavi's first description of Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the following: **מי אֵל כְּמוֹךָ** – Who is a Keil like you? Now, the word Keil; Alef

lamed means that He's the source of all energy. *Keil* means that He's the One who commanded all the particles of matter – I should say all the particles of energy – to come into existence, and if He would say stop, everything would collapse; not into dust – it would collapse into nothing at all.

It means that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is constantly providing energy to all of existence and He could withdraw that energy at any moment. If someone lifts up his hand to sin against Hashem, He could cause the sinner to die on the spot. And He should! After all, if you rebel against the One who is sustaining you, so you forfeit the right to live. At the very least his hand should wither away. You remember the case of Yeravam when he wanted to raise his arm against the one who rebuked him? So the Tanach tells us that Yeravam's arm dried and he couldn't move it. Hashem made his hand wither away on the spot! And that's what *Keil* means – He has the power to do it.

But, “Who is a *Keil* like You,” means much more than that; it means “Who is like You who utilizes all of His power to continue to bestow on the sinner all the abilities necessary to continue his existence *at the same time that he continues to sin.*” At the same moment that a man is lifting up his hand to sin, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is supplying him with the energy to continue to sin! He doesn't withdraw His goodness! That's the greatest strength we see in Hashem's interactions with Mankind – He tolerates the impertinence of man toward Him with such a tremendous tolerance that it's difficult for the mind to even fathom.

Humility Toward Others

I'll give you a *mashal*. Let's say there's a person who receives a stipend from you – every week you send him a remittance in the mail. And what does he do? With that money that you send him, he goes out to the store and buys stamps and paper and he writes letters to you in which he insults you; or he uses your gifts to do other things that hurt your spirit, that wound you. And nevertheless you continue to send him his stipend every week; you don't withdraw your goodness for even a minute. That's the *middah* of *Mi Keil Kamocha*, the willingness to suffer insolence at the hands of people and to continue to bestow good without fail.

That's a humility that's unequalled! That's why the *malachei hashareis*, when they view Hakodosh Boruch Hu in His relationship to

Mankind, so they call Him the “*Melech Ne’elav*” – the King who humbly allows himself to be put to shame. Imagine such a thing that at the same moment that someone is insulting you, you continue supplying him the wherewithal to continue insulting you. He’s waving his arm against you and you humbly uphold him; you’re supporting his arm and helping him to insult you!

Now I telescoped this idea; I abbreviated to some extent but we’re learning here that when we look at Hashem and we see this *middah* of *Mi Keil Kamocha* it opens up for us an entirely new vista of opportunity for perfection. Because that becomes our goal now. *Kedoshim tihiyu* means you must aspire to an attitude that no matter what someone does to you, you’re not going to withdraw your goodness from that person.

Part III. Emulating Hashem

Middos in Marriage

Now, that’s something that’s easy to say but let’s try a little bit to understand how to put it into practice. That’s what the *mitzvah* is after all; to take this *middah* of Hashem and make it our *middah* too – to study the “Personality” *kiviyachol* of Hashem the way He revealed it to us and make it our personality too.

So let’s say you young people will someday get married; it’s a good idea before you go down to the *chuppah* to study this *middah* as the Tomer Devorah represents it and make a decision that no matter what, you’re not going to withdraw any benefits from your spouse – whatever may happen you’ll continue to bestow your goodness in order to be something that resembles the ways of Hashem.

Spirit of Marriage

Let’s say a husband – it should never happen but imagine that a husband insulted his wife. So what does his wife do? Nevertheless she prepares for him a delicious supper and she puts it on the table just like every other night. She decides that no matter how difficult it may be, no matter how much strength it may take, she’s going to emulate the *middah* of *mi Keil kamocha* and never go on strike against her husband; she’ll never retaliate by denying her husband privileges. Despite what he

said to you, you're going to do everything that's necessary! *Kedoshim tihyu*, that's a holy woman!

And he too; he will never retaliate against her by refusing to bring in the money to support the house. His wife wronged him in some way? No matter! The husband who walks in the ways of Hashem performs his duties no matter what without interruption. Despite what she said or did to you, you're going to continue being loyal and you won't diminish by a hair's breadth all the things that a dutiful husband has to do, even including saying, "Good evening," when you come home at night.

That's the spirit of the old-time Jewish marriage – it's the *ruach* of a genuine Jewish home where people are serious about their obligations as Jews and live according to the ideals of emulating this *middah* of א-ל כְּמוֹדָךְ.

Married to The World

Now, I say husband and wife only because the encounters between a husband and a wife are more frequent than any other form of relationship. And therefore whatever perfection can be gained from proper contact with the rest of mankind, a great deal more can be achieved by means of the repeated contact between a husband and a wife. But even if you're not married, don't think that this doesn't apply to you, because you're married to the rest of the world anyhow. You're married to your landlord and to your neighbors. You're married to your parents and your friends and even your children – you're married to all of them and you're not going to get a divorce so soon because you intend to be in this world for some time yet.

To a certain extent you're married to everyone in this world and therefore emulating this *middah* of *Mi Keil Kamocha*, of having the strength of character to not withdraw your benefits from others no matter what, applies to your relationships with all of your acquaintances; whether they're your *chaveirim* in the *yeshiva* or your *rebbe*s who teach you, the people that you meet in the synagogue or encounter in your place of employment, you can always look to Hashem as your model.

Joining the Opposition

Suppose there is someone who you know is opposed to you. He slanders you; he tells people that your merchandise is not good quality.

And what do you do? In order to demonstrate that you want to be holy like Hakadosh Baruch Hu is, you go especially to shop in his store.

Now you could have organized a boycott. Let's say you're an important person and people listen to you. Perhaps you could limit his income; you might even be able to close him down altogether. Could be he deserves it too. I'm not saying so because if you think he does, then you're probably wrong, but let's imagine for a minute that he deserves it. But no matter, you don't withdraw any benefits from him. You make it your business to go in and patronize his business just *lesheim* this ideal of *mi Keil kamocho*.

Or maybe you're a *rebbe* in the *yeshivah* and you know there is a *talmid* who ridicules you. He belittles you behind your back and you know that. And nevertheless when he says a *sevara* in the *gemara* – even if it's not so good – you go out of your way to compliment him, to encourage him. And not only because you want to be known as a good *rebbe* – you add on the thought that you want to be like Hashem. That person is fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *kedoshim tihiyu*; he's gaining perfection, *kedusha*, by means of reinforcing this *middah* as he deals with others.

Now, I'm not saying that if you don't do these things you're *possul le'eidus* or we can't count you for a *minyan*. But we're not talking now about doing the minimum. We're talking about Jews who want to live up to the great principles and ideals of Torah.

Do It Right

Now you might say that you're doing it anyhow. It could be you're conscientious and you're living in such a manner without having any kind of admonitions from the Tomer Devorah. Of course it's just imagination, it's just a bluff, because without some model to emulate you won't be able to live a perfect life; but even if it was true it's a tragedy because if you're just doing it anyhow without any thought, so you're losing the great benefit of fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *kedoshim tihiyu*, of becoming perfect *because Hashem is perfect*.

Now, I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with doing it just for the sake of peace – that's not a bad idea by the way; better to live in peace than to live quarreling. But that's not enough because Italians do that too sometimes. There are Italians and Irishmen who are sensible enough to understand that it pays to live in peace. But it's a pity, however, that Jews should live like Irishmen. It's a tragedy to live like a gentile –

even a good gentile – when you can live like a Jew. So say with your mouth to yourself that you're doing it for a reason: *lisheim mitzvas kedoshim tihiyu*. That's the difference – we are His people and we emulate Him.

It's not natural? So what?! Nobody who is natural can be successful. In order to be successful, you must be unnatural. You must always keep ahead of yourself; you can't follow your nature. It's not natural to imitate Hashem. But we don't follow our nature. We follow our *seichel*, we follow the Torah.

Now, it's not necessary to mention to your spouse or your neighbor that you're doing it because of the *mitzvah*, no. Better not, because if the person thinks you're doing it only because of that, if he thinks that you're forced by your convictions and not by your emotions it's not so effective. So if you want to be effective, you make it seem natural.

Gaining Mitzvos

And so, let's say your wife said something to you, so you say to yourself or if nobody is around you can say it aloud: “הִנְנִי מוֹכֵךְ וּמְזַמֵּן לְקַיִם” – *מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שָׁל קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִי* – “I am going now to fulfill the mitzvah of being holy like Hashem is holy,” and then go and tell your wife, “You know, you're really special,” and that's all. Break the ice. She'll think it's because she did some favor for you. She'll think that's why you forgave her. She doesn't know that you heard this tonight.

Or tell your neighbor – the one who insulted you last week – “It's nice weather today!” He'll think you're in a good mood because of the nice weather. He doesn't know you're breaking the ice only because you're doing a *mitzvah* of the Torah.

That's the value of thinking about this *mitzvah* in connection with everything you do. If you can say, *הִנְנִי מוֹכֵךְ וּמְזַמֵּן* – “I am now about to fulfill the mitzvah of *kedoshim tihiyu*, you should be holy, *ki kadosh ani*, because I am holy,” then you're gaining a very great *mitzvah*.

Achieving Your Potential

Of course, everything we're talking about here is certainly not easy. Hakodosh Boruch Hu's ways are infinitely elevated; they're eternally sublime and far above our reach. But *kedoshim tihiyu* means that Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants us to strive to climb that endless ladder that is *magi'a hashomayma* and transform our minds and personalities by

means of coming a little closer to the perfection of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Not only are we fulfilling a *mitzvah* but we are awakening the *tzelem*, the image of Hashem, in the depths of our souls.

The great profundity of perfection within every Jew is brought forth from the depths by the means of striving to emulate Hashem. When you practice what we spoke about tonight you're going to cause your latent abilities, the hidden *middos* which reflect all the ways of Hashem, to come to the surface. By means of modeling your behavior and your thoughts and your actions after His, then *kedoshim tihiyu* – you're going to become more and more perfect all the time because it will bring forth from the recesses of your soul all of the golden qualities that you have within you.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Emulating Hashem in Daily Life

This week I will strive to fulfill the great precept of *Kedoshim tihiyu* by emulating Hashem's holy ways in my interactions with mankind. Every day I will take the *darkei Hashem* that we spoke about tonight (Loving the Am Yisroel, Not wasting words, Praising Hashem's creation and Keeping up the good even to someone who irked me) and try to apply each one every day with the intention of being like Hashem.

— This week's booklet is based on tapes: —

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך ויקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

I saw a phrase in the Mesillas Yesharim that seemed to say that Hashem will not overlook a person's misdeeds and that to even believe that He might, is a dangerous thought. Can the Rabbi please explain that concept?

A:

It's very important to realize that *יתרו חיינו*, יותרו הוא, כל האומר הקב"ה ותרן הוא, - Somebody who says that Hashem will disregard his bad deeds, then Hashem will disregard his life (Bava Kama 50a). It's a very serious statement. Anybody who thinks that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not a strict judge, he should know that for that alone he deserves to be seriously punished. Because it means that this person is disregarding his whole purpose in life.

You're here in this world to make to yourself great - great in the service of Hashem. And you won't get anywhere if you live with the false attitude that you can get away with misdeeds. The number one thing to know is that the world is under supervision. The world is strictly judged and we are held accountable for everything. We came into a world that is full of *nisyonos* - full of tests - and we are all subject to the test of this world. Nobody is exempt from this function of passing the test.

How to pass that test? Well, if you come to these lectures and practice what you hear, that's definitely a good start. But whatever it is, one thing is certain - Hakodosh Boruch Hu will not yield. He does not give people good marks for nothing. You have to earn your good marks and that's all. It's a serious world and you're expected to treat it with the utmost caution and *koved rosh* - with the utmost seriousness.

So what's the question?! Of course, you have to keep everything in the Torah. Hashem won't be *mevater*. He won't overlook anything. And there's no way around it - you have to keep everything. And then Hashem says, "Now you're passing the test of life. Now you're succeeding at what you came into this world to do."

TAPE # E-189

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