



Ohr Yerushalayim News

10th May 2025 - Volume 17 - Issue 38 אחר - קדושים - י"ב אייר תשפ"ה

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Dan and Rochelle Smith on the birth of a granddaughter to Simon & Abi Ibgui in London.

Kiddush

There is a Kiddush this week following Davening partly sponsored by Charles Bursk and partly by Nat Davidson in honour of the Yahrtzeit of his father this week.

For future sponsorship opportunities speak to either Marc Zimmel or Avi Stern or put your name down on the list in the foyer against the week you would like to sponsor or part sponsor.

Lag B'Omer BBQ

We look forward to welcoming all members to the annual family BBQ which takes place this Thursday evening in the grounds to the rear of the Shul, details overleaf.

Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to the following who have Yahrtzeit this week:

- Sun, 13th Iyyar - Rebbetzen Cohen for her mother
- Tues, 15th Iyyar - Bobbie Graham for his mother
- Weds, 16th Iyyar - Anne Wilks for her mother
- Thurs, 17th Iyyar - Nesanel Davidson for his father

Thinking About The Mitzvah You Are Doing

Rabbi J Rubinstein

There is a well known story about the professor who lectured and wrote eloquently about ethics and morals, but who lived an extremely immoral life. Somebody once asked him, "You write and speak so brilliantly about morals, why dont you practice what you preach?" he answered "I have a colleague who lectures about mathematics, you dont ask him why he does not become a triangle or an equation. Mathematics is the subject of his lectures, that does not mean he has to be, the subject of his lectures. I lecture on morals, that does not mean I have to be, like the subject I lecture about".

This is of course the opposite of the approach Jewish tradition teaches us to have, towards studying Judaism. The greatest teachers of Jewish law were people who embodied in their own lives the meaning of those laws. There is nothing more inspiring than reading the biographies of people like the Chafetz Chaim and Rav Moshe Feinstein, and observing how meticulously and selflessly they kept what they were teaching.

I was also told once by somebody, that going to Shul is like belonging to a Freemason's lodge. You have to observe certain rituals which have no real meaning, repeat certain passwords and phrases, (I think he said, recite some mumbo jumbo,) and you become part of a select club with all the advantages that brings! This obviously showed a complete lack of understanding of what Shul is about.

The Zohar says, "When the holy group of people reached this Parshah, (of Kedoshim,) they became very happy" Rav Yaakov Neiman explained; people thought, in order to become Kedoshim-Holy people, they had to be completely isolated from society and live an abnormal kind of life. But when they learnt this Parshah, they discovered the Torah says, קדושים תהיו - "You shall be holy", and then goes on to explain, "You shall fear your father and mother" and "You shall guard My Shabbos", and other laws. They realised that the simplest of Jews can become holy, one only has to keep the commandments, many of which are mentioned in this Parshah. This also makes clear, the significance of the words we say before doing a Mitzvah, במצותיו, אֱשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ - "Who made us holy with His commandments" It is hopefully superfluous to say, Judaism is meant to be lived! There is

absolutely no such thing as an empty ritual or mumbo jumbo in Judaism. We may not know how they work, but every Mitzvah we do, and every prayer we recite, adds Kedushah-sanctity to our lives. One could add, Rav Yaakov Edelstein said that even the Jew whose mind is preoccupied with his business or other mundane matters at the very moment he is performing the Mitzvah, still gains an infusion of holiness and earns a reward by doing the Mitzvah. But it is not to be compared, to the benefit which is given to a person who concentrates on the Mitzvah he is performing, and thinks about the meaning of the Mitzvah, while he is fulfilling it.

One could say, a major message from the Parshah of Kedoshim, is to strive to avoid doing any of the Mitzvos by rote without thought, and just out of habit. The more we focus our thoughts before doing a Mitzvah, and concentrate on fulfilling it in the best possible way, the more we can be like the people who became happy when they learnt this Parshah, and the more we can become elevated by each Mitzvah which we do.

Holy, Holy, Holy

Dov Brysh

Be holy! Now that's a commandment. It's bold, it's sharp, and it sounds very spiritual indeed: be holy! Problem is, it's not very clear. How are we to be holy? What even is holiness that we should be it? Are we to lock ourselves in monasteries, wearing nothing but sackcloth robes with rope for belts and taking vows of silence? That sounds pretty holy to some religions. How about smoking dubious looking herbs and whirling around in a fit of transcendent ecstasy? Lots of people think that is rather holy indeed. So, what then are we supposed to do to be holy?

Cast your mind back to Seder night. I'm sure it was a beautiful, calm, uplifting occasion for all. Nobody spilt any wine on the brand new white tablecloth, the kids all asked wonderful questions and sat enraptured by your telling of Sipur Yetzias Mitrayim, nobody whined or made a fuss over the size of the k'zayis of marror you gave them to eat, the afkoman didn't get crushed to smithereens in the scramble to hide/find/grab/keep it, and (most importantly) you finished later than anybody else. What a lovely seder. Ahhhh. One sec, I mentioned this thing called The Afkoman". Hang on, isn't it odd though? I mean, where do we talk about an afkoman in the Haggada? Yup, that's correct (10 points to you), it's in the answer we give to the Chochom's question; we are told to tell him the Halachos of eating Korbon Pesach up to and including "ein maftirin achar haPesach afkoman" - "we do not have any afkoman after the Pesach". Wait a second, the piece of matza that we eat after Shulchan orech, at which in the time of the Beis Hamikdash they would have eaten the Korban Pesach, we call afkoman, the exact thing we are told we cannot eat! And what does the word even mean? Ok, bear with me here because it's about to get a little controversial now. So, yes, it's true, the Gemoro does say that afkoman means dessert, saying the word is a contraction

Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.53pm-8.00pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.11am
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
Mincha	6.00pm / 8.53pm
Motzei Shabbos	9.58pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.40pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

of "afiku manei" - "bring out food" and what food do you bring out after main course? Dessert. The problem is that the word afikoman is clearly Greek in origin, so it isn't going to be a contraction of 2 Aramaic words. In fact, we know exactly what the word means in Greek as well. The word is Epikumon, and it basically means an after-party. You see the Greeks (well some of them, anyway) didn't do dessert like we do, no little plates with tiramisu and tastefully drizzled chocolate sauce. Oh no, no, no. After they had a festive feast, some Greek cultures would go from house to house having parties at which inordinate amounts of sweet treats and copious quantities of alcohol were consumed, and these were called Epikumon. So you can see that the Gemoro knew the meaning of the word and to explain it to an audience presumably unfamiliar with Greek retrofits what we might call a folk etymology. But what of the actual etymology? Here's where things get crazy. A long, long, time ago on the island of Samos there lived a philosopher who, believing that this material world was all there is, founded a school of thought that stated that the ultimate purpose in life was to have as much physical pleasure as possible in whatever way makes you happy - in other words anything that gives you pleasure is morally good, anything that does not is morally bad. His philosophy had 4 basic creeds (the Tetrpharmakos, or 4-part remedy), the first of which was this: "Don't fear G-d". This philosophy was so obviously antithetical to Jewish thought that the Sages took his name as a byword for heresy. His name was Epicurus. That's right, apikores. Remember that after-party dedicated to physical pleasure? Would you believe it, named in his honour. Epikumon is the Epicurian party. Woah boy. So now, not only is the afikoman the thing we are told specifically not to partake of after Korban Pesach, it's also the apikores fest. And here we are, calling whatever's left of our hidden away, dry lechem oni after it?! It's all a bit, well, odd.

To save us from this oddness, we need to consider (as the Rambam points out) Judaism's tendency to highlight its difference by stark contrast (I refer you, for those who remember it, to "Salt and Vinegar Karpas", published a number of Pesachs ago in this very publication). Here is the Korban Pesach, possibly the ceremony within Judaism that could possibly be considered anywhere near closely resembling an ancient "family sacrifice ritual", those same rituals after which they would go out for an Epikumon. And the chachamim said no, we don't do that. Our celebration is different, what we want to have remaining when we're done is the taste of the mitzva. We have taken a nice, geshmake lamb and spit-roasted it, and maybe you Greeks have done that too. But our enjoyment comes from taking that deliciousness and using it for a higher purpose, whilst yours is about the physical pleasure for the sake of it. And to drive that point home further, over time the name Afikoman came to fall into general use for the piece of matza that we use to remember having to eat the Korban Pesach. This, this piece of a matza, this piece of a mitzva, this is our Epikumon.

Great, so we've sorted that out the afikoman problem. Well done us. But you may well be wondering (or not, up to you really) what this has to do with being holy. You see I chose it because it is a standout example of what the Gemoro means when it tells us: "Kadesh atzmecha b'muttar loch". Kedusha is achieved not by withdrawal or by negation, it is achieved through the things we can do and have and use. It is not abstinence, hermitage, or asceticism - that is why the Nazir brings a korban chatas according to R' Eliezer Hakappar, he is a sinner in that he forbade himself that which Hashem did not. Who are you, wonders the Rambam, to deny yourself that which Hashem has made for your pleasure? The Kotzker is reputed to have said, and this should probably be taken with a pinch or nineteen of salt (the Kotzker is reputed to have said a great many things), that the first mitzvas asei in the Torah is "mikol etz hagan ochol tocheil". Rav Hirsch, when asked why he used to take his yearly holiday in Switzerland, replied "When I go to Shomayim, the first thing Hashem will ask is, 'nu, R' Yid, did you see My Alps?'" And yet, we are not Epicurians. We do not have pleasure for pleasure's sake. We take it in order to further our appreciation of the Divine, to bring His Goodness and Munificence into our consciousness. Our Afikoman is boundaried, it is matza and not a party. We do it with restraint, with self-control, and, in the words of Rav Hirsch, "with a positive aim and a negative limit". Limits (it pains me to engage in further shameless self-promotion, but Salt and Vinegar Karpas again people) are what enable growth, but constriction suffocates and complete avoidance negatively reinforces itself. This, then, is holiness: to use your Divinely-given free will to use it to make the choice not to run away from the world but to engage in it on your terms for the purpose of your connection to HKBH. To disavow yourself of "gashmiyus" is cowardice; to have a feste steak with triple-fried chips and to have the self-control to eat it like a mentch, to have the presence of mind to



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 for our annual family
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 6.30pm at Shul
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say a bracha with kavana beforehand recognising that this goodness is ultimately from Hashem, and a bracha acharona with kavana afterwards to thank Him for the privilege of being able to have eaten it, and maybe even to leave a chip or two on the side to show that you are not an animal giving in to all your base desires, is holiness. So by all means eat, drink, and be merry but remember to be Holy.