



TIFERET HASHABBAT

This Week in Tiferet

This week Tiferet saw the kick-off of our annual **Hilchot Berachot** campaign, spearheaded by **Rabbi Simi Sherman**. Our students are voluntarily taking on extra hours of learning Hilchot Berachot, pushing themselves even further as the year draws to a close. We look forward to seeing the fruit of their labor in the rigorous tests that will be given at the end of this period. Our students also viewed an interesting and informative Aliyah panel this week, put together by our Rakazot. The panelists shared their perspectives on the beauty and difficulties of making Aliyah.

תורת תפארת

Just Be Normal!

Rav Elie Mayer
Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim

It's interesting how Parshat Acharei Mot - Kedoshim (which translates as after the death of the holy ones) always closely follows Yom Hashoah and Yom Hazikaron, when we memorialize the loss of our kedoshim. This is especially true this year when HaGaon HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein, the highly esteemed Gadol Hador and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion passed away in the week when in Eretz Yisrael, Parshiyot Acharei Mot-Kedoshim was read.

With the enormity of the loss to Am Yisrael still fresh, I would like to share a teaching from Rav Lichtenstein, zt'l on Parshat Kedoshim. Since Rav Lichtenstein had a doctorate from Harvard in English Literature, I will introduce the teaching with an analysis by the writer Joseph Wood Krutch. Krutch wrote about the concepts of 'average' and 'normal' and lamented how society identifies the normal with average which is to believe that what most people do must be right. What most people mean by 'normal' is really 'average'. Krutch posits that confusing normal and average leads to moral relativism. Everyone is doing it and therefore it is proper and normal.

Rabbi Norman Lamm applies this idea to Torah. The average Jew may speak Lashon Hara but the normal Jew would never do so. When we try to be 'normal' that means that we try to be average - just like everyone else. However, the Torah and its complete fulfillment is normal. Lacking Torah commitment is average. We should regret average and strive for normal. If someone urges you to hug your cousin or to dress immodestly to 'just be normal' they are really asking you to be average.

In Parshat Acharei Mot, Hashem demands that we not stoop to the average of our society. "Like the practice of Egypt, in which you lived, you shouldn't do; and like the practice of Canaan, to which I am bringing you, you should not do and do not follow their laws." The average of our community is not what we should aspire to. Average is just that, 'average'. Average is common or ordinary. As Hashem's people, we are expected to be extraordinary. Extraordinary is our normal. To be average is to be less than normal.

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תורת תפארת (המשך)

To be average as many of our friends and family would prefer us to be, would be like asking a brilliant student to get a C when he could have achieved an A+.

A student in Yeshivat Har Etzion recalled that during the Second Intifada, some students subscribed to the Jerusalem Post to stay abreast of the worrying current events. Since the mailbox was close to the Chadar Ochel, some students who didn't subscribe, would take out the newspapers to read while waiting in line for the meal. Someone posted a sign asking people not to do so without permission because it would crinkle their papers. Soon after, Rav Lichtenstein called an emergency sicha and quoted the Mishna in Avot, "What's mine is mine and what's yours is yours is a beinonit - an average person. And some say that it is a midah of S'dom." Rav Lichtenstein, visibly upset, held up the sign and asked, "Are we striving to be beinonim - average? Is that what we're aiming for?"

Rav Lichtenstein z'tl taught that Parshat Kedoshim is unique in that there are many very different halachot taught in adjoining pesukim and even within the same pasuk. For example, the Mitzvah of revering our parents is mentioned in the same verse as the Mitzvah of shmirat Shabbat. The halachot of Kilayim immediately follows loving your fellow Jew. Therefore, teaches Rav Lichtenstein, our Parsha more than any other demonstrates to us the interconnectivity of the Torah laws. To ignore even one law is to be deficient even in the halachot that we do observe. We cannot pick and choose and compartmentalize the Torah. Even though at times, for the goal of lowering ourselves to the common denominator (being normal), we fall short in our commitment, we must accept the Torah in its entirety as our way of life and our true normal and strive to fulfill it to its fullest extent-- even those halachot which society tells us makes us abnormal.

May Hashem give us the strength and courage to deny the temptation to be average, to refuse to be a beinonit, to not sell ourselves short and to dedicate ourselves to a lifetime of growing in Torah and Mitzvot. The next time someone implores you to 'just be normal', respectfully respond that you are indeed trying very hard to be normal - the normal of our Avot and Imahot, the normal of our Rishonim and Achronim and the normal of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein.

Shabbat Shalom!

Mazal Tov!

Mazal Tov to Lia Botwinick (5771) on her engagement to Eytan Schiller! May they be zochim to build a bayit ne'eman b'Yisrael together!



Counting on You Being Nice Rebecca Gross (5775)

This week's parsha in Eretz Yisrael, Parshat אמור, discusses all of the yamim tovim in one parsha. All of the holidays provide a unique way to connect to Hashem. On Yom Kippur we connect through fasting and teshuvah, on Succot we connect through שמחה, on Pesach through redemption, and on Shavuot with Talmud Torah. When the parsha talks about the significance of Sefirat Haomer, it also talks about the mitzvah of פאה (leaving the corners for the poor people) and לקט (leaving something dropped accidentally for the poor). Why are these topics brought up if doesn't have to connect with a specific holiday?

We know that every holiday has its focus, and that is how we connect with Hashem. When we get so focused on connecting with Hashem, it looks like we only care about ourselves because everything else gets all blurred out. It is necessary to mention פאה in the middle, to show that you care about your others. If we were to forget about פאה, then we would be missing the point of the holidays.

Both פאה and לקט are placed in the middle of the paragraph of Sefirat Haomer. If Hashem could speak about the topic anywhere in this parsha, then why did He decide to place it there? We recognize the time of Sefirat Haomer to mourn Rabbi Akiva's students, who didn't reflect enough on each other's feelings. We also get so closed up on ourselves that we forget about אדם לחברו sometimes.

Currently, we are going through the time of Sefirat Haomer. Sometimes we only remember at night to count the omer but there is something more than that to remember. We should not only focus on ourselves but more importantly focus on the people around you.