

(Dvar Torah continued from front page...)

of the Israelites, whatever their sins; and he shall do the same for the Ohel Mo'ed (Tent of Meeting), which abides with them in the midst of their uncleanness." (VaYikra 16:16). The simple meaning is that before the Kohen Gadol enters into them to perform the special Yom Kippur ritual to purge the nation of its sins, he has to perform particular rites to "purge" the Kodesh and the Ohel Mo'ed of the uncleanness **they** have accumulated due to Bnei Yisrael's sins. But that last phrase - "which abides with them in the midst of their uncleanness" - jumps out for being so obvious (Like, **of course**, the Kodesh and the Ohel Mo'ed are still there, where else would they be?) and asks us to dig deeper.

The Mishkan was built, as its name makes clear, as a place for God to dwell in the midst of Bnei Yisrael. As Shemot 25:8 says, "*V'asu li Mikdash, v'shachanti b'tocham.*" We know that those entering the Mishkan must, therefore, take the utmost care to be pure. So we might have thought that the general impurity of the Israelite nation would make it impossible for the Mishkan to be there - or more exactly, for **God's presence, the Shechinah**, to dwell there. (Absent God's presence, the Mishkan isn't really a Mishkan). Our verse comes to communicate something quite important, as Rashi explains in his commentary: "...although they are unclean, nevertheless the Shechinah dwells in their midst." God is with us, individually and collectively, even when we sin. It is not how and when we worship, what we eat, and with whom we are intimate that drives away the Shechinah. Rather, as we see in Babylonian Talmud Sotah 5a, the issue is **pride**:

Rav Hisda says, and some say that Mar Ukva says: Concerning any person who has arrogance within him, the Holy One, Blessed be He, said: He and I cannot dwell together in the world, as it is stated: 'He who slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I destroy; he who is haughty of eye and proud of heart, him will I not suffer [oto lo ukhal]' (Psalms 101:5-6). These verses should be understood as follows: Do not read the verse as: "*Oto lo ukhal*"; rather, read it as: *Itto lo ukhal*, meaning, with him, I cannot bear to dwell.

All communities - right and left, modern and traditional - commit their sins and accumulate their impurities, but God dwells in our midst as long as we stay humble. And the best way to do that is to stay focused on what we get wrong and others get right, and not vice versa. Rabbi Irving "Yitz" Greenberg, an Orthodox rabbi often seen as the standard-bearer for pluralism and Jewish communal unity, captured this notion well when he said "I don't care what denomination you belong to, as long as you're **embarrassed** by it."

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## TORAH SPARKS

### Parashat Aharei Mot

### Shabbat Mahar Hodesh

### Shabbat Mevarekhim Hahodesh

May 4, 2019 | 29 Nisan 5779

Annual (Leviticus 16:1-18:30): Etz Hayim p. 679; Hertz p. 480  
Triennial (Leviticus 17:1-18:30): Etz Hayim p. 685; Hertz p. 485  
Haftarah (1 Samuel 20:18-42): Etz Hayim p. 1216; Hertz p. 948

## D'var Torah: With Him I Cannot Dwell

*Rabbi Andy Shapiro Katz, CY Director of North American Engagement*

After referring back to the death of Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, a few parashot ago, Aharei Mot goes on to cover three main topics: 1) Yom Kippur, including the activities of the Kohen Gadol in the Holy of Holies and the preparation of the "Seir L'Azazel" - the goat upon which the nation's sins are placed before it is sent away, 2) Kashrut, including the prohibition of consuming blood, and 3) Prohibited sexual relations.

Although there doesn't appear to be much of a connection between the three, I suggest that each represents one of the main categories of Jewish ritual law: 1) worship in particular times and places, 2) regulation of consumption and, 3) regulation of intimate relationships, even between consenting adults. Generally speaking, these are the areas where "ethics" is the least involved.

These are also the areas that make us most distinct as Jews, setting us apart from the non-Jewish world and dividing the Jewish people into different religious streams and sub-communities. We may have particular ways we understand and apply particular value-laden "ethical commandments," but we are not divided by questions of how much tzedaka we give.

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It is within that context that we encounter a puzzling verse: “Thus he shall purge the Kodesh (the central area of the Mishkan) of the uncleanness and transgression

## **D’var Haftarah: A Biblical Model for Rebuke**

*Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein, Conservative Yeshiva Faculty*

David’s relationship with King Saul was complicated. David once had Saul’s favor, but as his status grew, so did Saul’s jealousy and suspicion. Saul’s anger was exacerbated by David’s friendship with Saul’s heir apparent, his son Jonathan. As Saul’s anger became more palpable, David began to fear for his life, leaving Jonathan to act as intercessor between the two. David and Jonathan hatched a scheme for David to absent himself from the king’s special Rosh Hodesh banquets as a means to assess whether David’s life was really in danger. When David did not show up at Saul’s table two days in a row, Saul’s violent reaction led Jonathan to realize that David was no longer safe in Saul’s presence. When Jonathan reproached his father for his seemingly irrational behavior, Saul reacted violently: “And Saul was incensed with Jonathan and he said to him: ‘O, son of a perverse wayward woman! Don’t I know that you have chosen the son of Yishai to your own shame and the shame of your mother’s nakedness?... And Saul cast the spear at him to strike him down.’” (verses 30;33)

The sages saw in Jonathan’s confrontation with his father a Torah given obligation to reprove a wrongdoer: ‘Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt because of him.’ (Lev. 19:17) In the Talmud, the sages debate the limits of this mitzvah based on the interaction between Jonathan and Saul: “How far shall reproof be administered? ... Rabbi Eliezer said: Until he [the reprover] be beaten. Rabbi Yehoshua said: Until he be cursed. Ben Azzai said: Until he be rebuked. Said Rabbi Nahman bar Yitzhak: All the three expounded one Scriptural verse; [It is written:] Then Saul’s anger was kindled against Jonathan and he said unto him: ‘O, son of a perverse wayward woman! Don’t I know that you have chosen the son of Yishai to your own shame and the shame of your mother’s nakedness?’ And it is written: And Saul cast his spear at him to strike him down. The one who said [above] ‘Until he be beaten’ [said so] because it is written: ‘to strike him down’; the other who said: ‘Until he be cursed’ [said so] because it is written: ‘to your own shame and to the shame of your mother’s nakedness’; the other, who said: ‘Until he be rebuked’ [said so] because it is written: ‘Then Saul’s anger was kindled.’” (Arakhin 16b)

In a previous discussion, one sage concludes that the “art” of rebuking has fallen into disfavor since no one knows how to do it properly, on the one hand, while no one is really prepared to accept it on the other. However, the full range of opinions in the above discussion enters into the halachic discussion in practice. Rabbi Moshe Isserles (Poland 16<sup>th</sup> century) rules that one should reprove someone (privately) until the person either listens or strikes or curses you. Rabbi Avraham

Gumbiner (Magen Avraham – Poland 17<sup>th</sup> century) limits the application of this law to someone with whom the reprover is close but one should be wary of reproof someone who will not listen or who is likely to hate the reprover. (Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayim 608:2) What is clear is that the Jewish tradition finds it important for each of us to try to help each other to do what is right. It is also important, however, to use wisdom in dealing with others and to be aware when one’s actions are likely to be helpful and not a hindrance.

## **Parashat Aharei Mot Self-Study**

*Vered Hollander-Goldfarb, Conservative Yeshiva Faculty*

During Pesach (Passover) we took a break from the regular Torah readings, now we are back to the book of Vayikra (Leviticus). We are picking up from the death of Aharon’s sons in the middle of the preparations and festivities of the inauguration of the Tabernacle. This section is also the Torah reading for Yom Kippur.

- 1) This parashah opens with a statement of the timing of these instructions: after the death of Aharon’s sons. Moshe is instructed “speak to Aharon your brother” instructing him as to when and how he may enter the holy area beyond the partition (16:1-2). How might the timing be related to the unusual term “speak to Aharon *your brother*”?
- 2) To go into the Kodesh (Holy), Aharon has to wear clothing made strictly of fabric, not containing any of the rich materials in his regular garments as Kohen Gadol (16:4). What might be the reason for that? (You can also consider what he might have looked like by the end of the process.)
- 3) The entire process of atoning for himself and the people is a lengthy process, involving a lot of physical work (16:3-24). Most of this had to be done by Aharon himself. What is the message in the Kohen Gadol doing the work rather than supervising it?
- 4) Chapter 17 deals with blood of slaughtered animals. If it is a sacrifice, the blood is burned as an offering. We may never eat it for the blood is the living-soul of every flesh (17:14.) How might this way of thinking inform our thinking about eating meat? (Which is not prohibited per se.)
- 5) Chapter 18 speaks about forbidden sexual relations, mostly incest. That part of the list begins with a general warning against such relations, closing with the statement “I am the LORD” (18:5). What do you think that the closing phrase is meant to convey?

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