

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

Love The Shrek as Thyself

April May 1-7, 2021
30 Nisan-6 Iyar, 5781

Torah Reading:
Kedoshim:
Leviticus 19:1 - 20:27
Haftarah: Ezekiel 20:2-20

PARSHAT
KEDOSHIM

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzah for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

The most famous golden rule of life is found in the second of this week's Torah readings. *Love thy fellow as thyself* ([Leviticus 19:18](#)), is not only famous, it also sounds like an injunction that is virtually impossible to fulfill. Can one ever hope to reach such an exalted level of saintliness to love anyone else as much as we love ourselves? Is the [Torah](#) not being naïve and utterly unrealistic?

Indeed, the classical commentaries grapple with this issue. Some suggest that we are being taught to act *as if* we love the other fellow. If we *behave* in such a way, the actual emotion may well follow in time.

The Chassidic classic *Tanya* (Chapter 32) teaches that if one is able to put physical considerations aside and focus on the spiritual, it may actually be within the realm of the possible to achieve true love of another. Indeed, our petty likes and dislikes are all based on physical preferences. We either approve or disapprove of the way others look, talk, dress, behave etc. But those are all material concerns. If we would only remember that these are but superficial, external, and of little consequence, we wouldn't take them at all seriously.

What matters most is the spiritual. The real person is not the body but the soul.

The essence of every individual is not his nose but his *neshama*. So what if he's ugly and his mother dresses him funny? His soul is pure and untainted. Who knows if the other fellow's soul is not greater, holier and more pristine than mine? No one can say his soul is better than the next person's.

By focusing on the inner identity of a person we can avoid getting irritated by their outer idiosyncrasies. We might think someone weird but would we ever accuse him or her of having a weird soul? So if we can rise above the superficial and concentrate on the spirit rather than the body, on the essence rather than on the external we do have a chance of observing this fundamental mitzvah in the literal sense.

How easy it is to fall into the trap of labeling people, of categorizing them and writing them off. *Him? A meshuggener! Her? Rotten to the core! That family? They are impossible!*

Many years ago I was trying to help a man organize a *get* (Jewish religious divorce) for his estranged and already civilly divorced wife. The problem was that she refused to cooperate. (Usually, the problem is the reverse.) So I engaged an attorney friend of mine to help with the case. The next day he called me to say it was all sorted out. I couldn't believe my ears. "How did you do it?" I asked incredulously. He answered with such genuine directness that I was completely taken aback. "I called her up and said, 'I believe you are not an ogre.' Immediately, I received a favorable response and the deal was done."

Nobody is really an ogre. (Even Shrek was a nice ogre.) If we can learn to give people the benefit of the doubt we might be surprised at how friendly and cooperative they really can be. Individuals with the most notorious reputations aren't half as bad as they are made out to be when we get to know them. Human monsters are rare indeed. The spark of humanity needs but to be aroused and the G-dly soul is stirred and revealed.

So let's try and be more generous, a little more patient and forgiving. We may well be surprised at how lovable some people can be.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Restraint is Power

Have you ever felt like losing your temper but at the last moment you managed to restrain yourself? Inner battles of this kind are often associated with traffic wardens and similar representatives of officialdom. Sometimes they are found in encounters on the domestic front as well...

The Parshah of *Kedoshim* (Leviticus chapters 19-20) starts with the idea that we should be holy. What exactly does this mean? The commenter Rashi explains that the term "holy" implies self-restraint. There are many temptations in life. To be holy means to have the ability to control one's immediate

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impulses.

Another commentator, Nachmanides, makes the point that this self-restraint may sometimes take a person to a point beyond the simple letter of the law. Jewish law permits a person to eat kosher food: but should one be an out-and-out glutton? According to this view, even if the food is as [kosher](#) as could be, restraint is power; it shows that one is truly free as an individual, rather than just being just a slave of one's appetite.

Do you remember the story of Jacob and Esau and the plate of lentils? One way of understanding that story is that Esau was ready to sell his birthright, the most precious thing in his life, for a plate of food. One response might be: "How pathetic!" Others might feel sympathy with someone who is sometimes a slave to his senses. They might say that after all, this is our human situation. Nonetheless, many people would expect a person to aspire to be master of his or her own being: in control. A human being, yes. An animal — no.

Much of the [Parshah](#) is devoted to giving guidelines about this kind of self-mastery, in a number of different areas of life. Central is the theme of personal relationships. The keynote to these is the famous teaching "Love your neighbor as yourself" ([Leviticus 19:18](#)). Rabbi Akiva said that this is the great principle of the Torah; it relates to all other aspects of Jewish thought. The Parshah also instructs us not to take revenge, nor even to bear a grudge. This certainly needs self-control: in our actions, our words and even our thoughts.

Imagine such a person! Does he or she actually exist? We can imagine a very simple, naive or even inspired kind of person, who never sees bad in anyone. Or we can imagine a person of power, who has acquired genuine inner self-mastery.

What is power? For a long time, people thought that it means mastery over others. Now we realize, it is mastery over oneself.

Daily life presents us with many instances of the personal battles described in our Parshah: in relationships with our parents, in business dealing, in questions about giving charity, in the borders between men and women, and also regarding our behavior when we are genuinely in power over others, as judges. Thus the portion tells us to be fair in judgment to both rich and poor.

The portion presents the challenge of the power of restraint, building a world of goodness for the future, when the whole world will be filled with holiness.

By Tali Loewenthal

Sunday, May 1, 2022 – 30 Nissan, 5782

Passing of R. Chaim Vital (1620)

Nissan 30 is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of the famed Kabbalist Rabbi Chaim Vital (1542?-1620), author of the mystical work *Eitz Chaim*. Rabbi Chaim was the leading disciple of [Rabbi Isaac Luria](#) (the "Holy Ari," 1534-1572) and the transcriber of his teachings, which form the "Lurianic" Kabbalah.

Monday, May 2 2022 --- 1 Iyar 5782

Construction of 2nd Temple (370 BCE)

Fifty three years following the destruction of the First Holy Temple (see Jewish History for the [9th of Av](#)), Zerubabel and Joshua the High Priest began construction of the Second Temple, with permission from King Cyrus of Persia. The offering of sacrifices had actually commenced a few months earlier, on the vacant lot where the 1st Temple stood, however it was only after the construction started on the 1st of Iyar that the [Levites](#) began accompanying the service with song and music. The construction was later halted after the hostile Samaritans supplied false slanderous information to Cyrus about the Jews' intentions. The construction was resumed many years later, and completed 21 years later under the reign of King Darius (see Jewish History for the [Third of Adar](#)).

Passing of R. Menachem Mendel of Horodok (1788)

Chassidic master Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok (1730?-1788), also known as Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, was one of the leading disciples of the second leader of the Chassidic Movement, Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch. Upon the latter's passing in 1772, R. Menachem Mendel was regarded by his colleagues as the leader of the Chassidic community in Russia, and [Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi](#) considered him his rebbe and mentor. In 1777, R. Menachem Mendel led [a group of 300 Chassidim to the Holy Land](#) and established Chassidic communities in Safed and Teberias. Rabbi Menachem Mendel passed away on the 1st of Iyar of 1788, and is buried in Tiberias.

Jews Counted in Desert (1312 BCE)

"G-d spoke to [Moses](#) in the Sinai Desert...on the first day of the second month [Iyar] during the second year from their [departure from Egypt](#), saying: 'Count the number of the nation of Israel, according to their families and their fathers' households.... Those who are twenty years old and older....'" ([Numbers 1:1-3](#))

Tuesday, May 3, 2022 --- 2 Iyar, 5782

Maharash Born (1834)

The fourth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn (1834-1882), known by the acronym "Maharash", was born in the town of Lubavitch (White Russia) on the 2nd of Iyar of the year 5594 from creation (1834). His father, [Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch](#) (the 3rd Chabad Rebbe, known as the "Tzemach Tzedek") once remarked that Rabbi Shmuel's birthday, coinciding with the 17th day of the [Omer Count](#), is defined by the Kabbalistic masters as *Tifferet sheb'Tifferet* ("Beauty of Beauty")

Although Rabbi Shmuel was the youngest of Rabbi Menachem Mendel's seven sons, he was chosen to succeed his father as "rebbe" and leader of Chabad in the movement's capital, Lubavitch (four of his brothers established branches of Chabad Chassidism in other towns in White Russia and Ukraine). In addition to leading his Chassidim, guiding and advising their spiritual and material lives and authoring many *maamarim* (discourses of Chassidic teaching), Rabbi Shmuel traveled extensively throughout Europe, meeting with government and business leaders to exert pressure on the Czarist regime to halt its instigation of pogroms against the Jews of Russia.