



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

Enhance Spirituality Without Arrogance

וַיִּדְבֹר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל־כָּל־עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם: אִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתַתִּי תִשְׁמְרוּ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם: (ויקרא יט:א-ג).

And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, Speak to the entire congregation of Bnei Yisrael, and say to them, You shall be holy, for I, Hashem, your God, am holy. Every man shall fear his mother and his father; and you shall observe My Sabbaths. I am Hashem, your God (Vakira 19:1-3).

Parshat Kedoshim opens with a command that we should all seek to be “holy” – קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ. That imperative is followed by two commands and a closing statement: (i) to fear one’s parents – אִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ; (ii) to observe Shabbat – וְאֶת שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ; and (iii) recognize that I am God – אֲנִי ה'.

Is there a connection between the three items that follow the command to be holy? Fearing one’s parents, observing Shabbat and recognizing God as our creator?

Rav Moshe Bick (חיי משה) offers an insightful interpretation. When one climbs the spiritual ladder, at times it leads to arrogance. One may work on their personal *kavana* (concentration) during davening which enhances their tefilla. Yet, when they see others complete *shmona esre* before them, they feel as if the other lacked proper *kavana*. When someone seeking to work on

their religious level increases the time they dedicate to learning, they may frown upon others whom they feel waste so much time that they could utilize more productively.

As we seek to enhance our spirituality, we need to be careful not to look down at others or be too proud of ourselves. Of course we should feel good with our progress, but rather than feel superior to others, we need to focus on the remaining areas in which we need to improve.

There is a Mishna in Pirke Avot (3:1) that reads as follows:

עֲקִיבָא בֶן מַהֲלָלֵל אוֹמֵר, הִסְתַּכַּל בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְּבָרִים וְאֵי אֲתָה בָּא לִידֵי עֵבֶרָה. דַּע מֵאֵין בָּאתָ, וּלְאֵן אֲתָה הוֹלֵךְ, וְלִפְנֵי מִי אֲתָה עֹתִיד לִתֵּן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבוֹן.

Akavyah ben Mahalalel said: mark well three things and you will avoid engaging in transgressions: know from where you come, and where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give an accounting and reckoning.

This Mishna offers advice as to how to avoid engaging in sin. Always remember from where you came, to where you are headed and before whom you are to appear and be judged. Rav Bick suggests that the pasuk that follows the imperative to be “holy” – lists three items that parallel these three principles listed in the Mishna in Pirke Avot – as both serve to help one who enhances

their spiritual level from becoming arrogant.

First – one should recall from where they came – therefore the first item that follows the command of *kedoshim tehiyu* is to fear one's parents. Recognize that you are human like everyone else.

The **second** item – remember where you are headed – all week long, we look forward to Shabbat. Each day of the week is counted as yom rishon, sheni, shlishi – the first, second and third day – building up towards Shabbat. Shabbat may also reference the Yom Shekulo Shabbat – the times of the Moshiach. It highlights that we are constantly working towards something, whether it be the Shabbat, or Olam Haba. Therefore, there is no room for arrogance, as we have not completed our task. Shabbat may also refer to rest, hinting to the fact that we are human and are not immortal beings, therefore there is no reason to be conceited.

Lastly, we are to recall- before whom we are to be judged- Ani Hashem Elokechem! We are humbled by God's greatness.

It is important for us to work hard at improving our spiritual level. However, as we do so, we need to be careful and avoid looking down at others and having an arrogant attitude. Only with respect to God is it said : כל מקום שאתה מוצא גדולתו של הקב"ה שם אתה מוצא ענוותנותו (מגילה לא, א)

Where you find God's greatness you also encounter his humility.

Man risks not being able to experience greatness and humility simultaneously. By remembering the three principles outlined in Pirke Avot and hinted to in our parsha (fearing one's parents, Shabbat and Ani Hashem), we can maintain our humility as we increase our Yirat Shamayim. ■



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