

*SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 8 Iyar 5786, the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the Omer, corresponding to April 25, 2026*

TORAH DIALOGUE  
(p. 480 Hz) (p. 705 S) (p. 434 Hi) (p. 636 AS)  
ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM

אחרי מות - קדושים

Leviticus 16:1

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED),

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1. When the Kohen Gadol seeks atonement from Hashem on Yom Kippur, he first asks forgiveness for himself, then his family and fellow tribesmen, and then finally for the nation of Israel. Usually, the nation of Israel would come first. In this case, a person cannot ask for forgiveness for another unless he is pure himself. There is an extension of this rule which I use in my career. When I am officiating at a wedding, and they call up the two witnesses to observe the giving of the ring, if I don't recognize them as obvious frum witnesses, I ask them to do Teshuva right then under the Chuppah before they attest to the proceedings. That way they become "born again" and are more capable to perform the Mitzvah at hand. This is the way I view the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur. He needs to cleanse himself before he can represent the nation. This would also extend to the Chazzan who is leading us on Yom Kippur, who is likened to a Kohen Gadol. Cleanse himself and do Teshuva before performing the Avodah for the congregation. (RED)

2. When the goat who is to die in the desert is sent away, he is given to an "ish itty." Rashi defines this term as a man who was designated for this task on the day before Yom Kippur. The Targum Yonatan defines the term as a person who was designated for this job a year before. I favor the RaDaK's interpretation: it was a person who was an expert in the ways of traveling in the desert. The word "itty" is related to the word "eit," which is "time." It is a temporary appointment for this man, and I don't envision that it was so lofty a job. Yet it was a crucial aspect to the ritual. This goat, the original "scapegoat," represented the removal of their sins and was sent away, never to be recalled again (Ibn Ezra). Quite a bizarre ritual, but you do whatever is necessary to lose your sins, to break away from your past and pledge yourself to a new and promising future.

3. There was a Chassidic Rebbe who said to his 5 year old son after Shacharit on Yom Kippur that he should go home now and get something to eat. When the boy returned to Shul, his father asked him whether he made Kiddush before he ate. The boy said no, he did not. The Rebbe was pleased with the answer. An underage child is not obligated to perform Mitzvot. He does Mitzvot in order to teach him the rules and regulations of our religious life. There is no educational value to make Kiddush on Yom Kippur. For when he grows up, he will be fasting on this day. But let us extend this conversation to a sick adult who must eat on Yom Kippur. Is he required to make Kiddush? From the

above story, it would seem that there would be an obligation to say Kiddush before eating on Yom Kippur. Unusual for sure, but logical.

4. Near the end of Acharei Mot, the Torah prohibits us from doing any deeds that our neighboring non-Jews are performing. This is debated in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 39) and among codifiers of Jewish law. Maybe it is just the religious rituals of the Goyim. There is one opinion of the Talmud that states that we are not to imitate negative activities of the non-Jewish world, but we may imitate positive or good activities of theirs. Near the end of the 19th century, Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch penned a responsum where he prohibited Jews placing flowers on a grave. That this was a ritual of the non-Jewish world. A generation later, Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman penned a responsum reversing that ruling. Rav Hoffman stated that there was no religious significance to this custom. It was merely a reaction to honor the deceased. Therefore, said Rav Hoffman, there is no prohibition in placing flowers on a grave, but generally it is not our custom to do so.

5. The beginning of Kedoshim is the command "to be holy." Rashi states that the command is to distance ourselves from the list of sexual prohibitions of the previous chapter. The Ramban states the command is to seek a moderate way of life. Drinking an intoxicating beverage is permitted, but getting drunk is not. We should practice moderation in all permitted activities and in this way we will embrace a holy way of life. Examine, if you will, the long list of rules of this Parshah: Revere parents, Shabbat, don't steal or lie. Don't place a stumbling block in front of a blind person. Love your neighbor. Being holy is not so demanding. It is definitely within reach! Review with intensity the laws of this Parshah and you will see what I mean. A religious code of conduct is really not as restrictive as it seems. Embracing a total way of life is rewarding and is beneficial to creating a terrific way of of life, a holy way of life. (RED)

6. One day some ultra-Orthodox Jews approached Rav Chaim of Volozhin in the beginning of the 19th century and asked him to ostracize the Maskilim of their city who degrade a Mitzvah way of life. Rav Chaim answered that they should look closely at three verses that the Torah places together. You shall be holy...You shall revere your parents... and don't turn to idols. And each verse ends with the clause: I am Hashem. These verses describe three types of Jews. The first class of Jews are the very religious who observe all the Mitzvot. Hashem is pleased with them, embraces them, and says to them that He is Hashem for them. The second class of Jews are moderate. They do not observe all the Mitzvot, but at least they revere their parents. Hashem is pleased and says I am Hashem for you as well. And there are ignorant Jews, who do not observe Mitzvot, but they are not idolators. They still identify themselves as Jews. To them as well, Hashem responds I am Hashem. I look at this story and see an endorsement of Rav Kook's attitude to the non-observant Jews who were building the State of Israel and were rejecting a Torah lifestyle. Rav Kook

would embrace them and role model a religious life in their midst.

7. The prohibition against stealing is written in plural, as if Hashem is realizing that there are many who steal. The Ibn Ezra comments that if one person steals and another sees it and is quiet, then the second person is an accomplice to the crime. Rav Yonatan Eyebeshitz (18th century Germany) wrote that if one person steals, the victim responds by stealing from someone else to make up for his loss. This feeds into a story of a woman who suffered the loss of a chicken from her backyard. In response, she stole a chicken from her neighbor. The neighbor responded from suffering a loss, and stole a chicken from someone else. This is the way of the world. How easy is it to create a society of thieves, where robbery becomes an accepting way of life. Maybe that is what the Torah had in mind, namely to warn against creating that type of society.

#### QUESTIONS FOR PARSHIYOT ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM 5786

##### I. From the Text

1. What does the Kohen Gadol have to do to allow him entry into the Kodesh Kadashim on Yom Kippur? (16:12)
2. How did the Kohen Gadol designate which goat was for Hashem (a sacrifice) and which was to be sent to his death in the desert? (16:8)
3. Which sexual sin is the only one that the Torah calls a To'aivah, an abomination, since it was so disgusting in the eyes of the Torah? (18:22)
4. What was the prohibited custom in ancient times as a practice of mourning? (19:28)
5. What is the national punishment for not observing the Mitzvot of the Torah? (20:22)

##### II. From Rashi

6. What does the word Azazel mean? (16:8)
7. Why is it prohibited to eat blood? (17:11)
8. We are prohibited from imitating the practices of the non-Jewish world. (18:3). Rashi brings Rabbi Meir's view that it means imitating the superstitions of the Emorites. What practical equivalents in today's world should be equally prohibited?
9. What is the "limited" law of Leket, gleanings of the harvest? (19:9)
10. A man cursed his parents after they died. Is he culpable for a death sentence? (20:9)

##### III. From the Rabbis

11. What is the connection between Yom Kippur and the death of Nadav and Avihu? (Meshech Chochmah)
12. The Torah states that we are to love converts. Isn't there a Mitzvah to love all Jews? What is the Torah adding here? (Rambam, Hilchot De'ot 6:4)
13. What is the connection between having correct weights and measurements in business to the Exodus from Egypt? (Chofetz Chaim)

##### IV. Midrash

14. Will Hashem forgive a person who sinned against another person? (Sifra)

##### V. Haftorah. Amos

15. Against whom is Amos addressing himself in this Haftorah?

##### VI. Relationships

- a) Sarah - Rivkah
- b) Sarah - Lot (2 answers)
- c) Avraham - Esav
- d) Yaakov - Mupim
- e) Kehat - Amram (2 answers)

#### ANSWERS FOR PARSHIYOT ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM 5786

1. He brings an incense offering with him into the Kodesh Kodashim.
2. By means of two lots which he draws at random.
3. Homosexuality.
4. To make a cut into your flesh.
5. Exile from Eretz Yisrael.
6. A strong (high) and mighty cliff.
7. Life is dependent upon blood. Therefore blood is used to gain atonement. And therefore, it is forbidden to eat.
8. Walking under a ladder, seeing a black cat, and the bad luck associated with breaking a mirror, or Friday the 13th.
9. If two ears of corn, for example, fall to the ground at any point during the harvest, they are gleanings that must be left for the poor. If three ears of corn or more fall together, the farmer may retrieve them.
10. Yes.
11. When righteous people die and ascend to Heaven, the righteous ones in Heaven rejoice and inspire a feeling of forgiveness and atonement to the survivors on Earth.
12. Hashem has a special love for converts.
13. When one falsified weights in business, he is considered as if he denies that there is a God.
14. Hashem will not forgive him until he first appeases the person whom he has wronged.
15. Against the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

##### Relationships

- a) Mother-in-Law Sarah
- b) Text: Aunt Sarah. Midrash: Brother-Sister
- c) Grandfather Avraham
- d) Grandfather Yaakov. (Mupim is Binyamin's son)
- e) Father-Son. And Brothers-in-law

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