

# DATA of Plano

Parshas Vayikra | 3 Nissan, 5783 | March 25, 2023

## Shabbos

Mincha: **7:00**

Candle lighting: **7:23**

Early Minyan: **8:30**

Shacharis: **9:15**

Latest time for Shema: **10:28**

Kiddush: **11:35**

Mincha: **7:00**

Maariv / Shabbos ends: **8:28**

## The Week Ahead

Mincha / Maariv: **7:25**

## What is Holiness?

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Fried



There is an age-old custom for Jewish children to begin their learning of scripture with the difficult book of Vayikra (Leviticus). At first glance, this custom seems strange. The general topics include Temple offerings and spiritual purity. It isn't an easy book. When choosing which book of the Torah to begin with, the obvious choice would seem to be Genesis, the Beginning, the story of creation which also offers a plethora of entertaining narratives- or perhaps Exodus, which discusses the making of the Jewish nation.

Indeed, this question was asked, and answered, during the times of the early sages "Why do young school children begin their Chumash learning with Vayikra and not with Bereishis (Genesis)? Because small children are innocent and pure, and Vayikra discusses the offerings, that are pure, unblemished, and which restore spiritual purity to a person. Therefore, it is fitting that the pure begin their education with the topic of purity" (Midrash, Leviticus Rabboh 7:3, Midrash Tanchuma Tzav #14). Along the same lines, Vayikra is sometimes called "the book of holiness and sanctity," for that is its theme. The English term for holy (and purity) brings with it a variety of connotations and imagery- much of which comes from other cultures.

I have often asked people to tell me what images or words come to mind when they hear "holy" and the answer ("the search for the holy grail" or hear "silent night, holy night"... ) is infused with legends and foreign values and proves hard to qualify in any language. The Jewish concept of holiness, kedusha, carries an entirely different flavor. While the theme is featured more prominently in this volume of the five books of Moses, the root word "kadosh" permeates the Hebrew language (which itself is called the "holy tongue"); it is found profusely throughout Scripture. It appears in the standard

blessings upon commandments, ("asher kid'shanu"), and appears throughout our prayers, "Kadosh, Kadosh,...". The term for marriage is "kiddushin", the name for the Temple, "Beis Hamikdash", and so on.

All of this is suggesting that the Jewish concept of holiness is not simply an abstract religious term but extends to our daily activities.

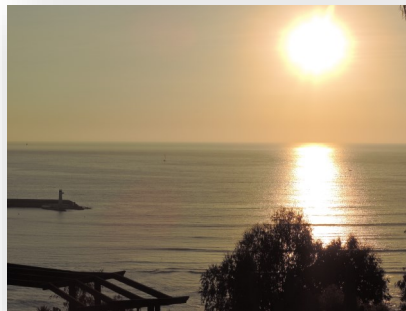
What does it mean for something to be "holy"? On the one hand to be holy is to be distinctly removed from the physical, literally meaning "separate." This characteristic is reserved for the Creator, Who is entirely transcendent - separate from creation.

Accordingly, one may uncover within the world, the good, the noble, the beautiful, and the exceptional- but all is still worldly, distant from "holiness." On the other hand, there are countless references to holiness within the world, implying some middle ground. And it is the latter concept of levels within holiness that presents a most fascinating component to Judaism. How

does it work?

To begin with, the commentaries relate a type of holiness that comes only through human action. The holiness of the land of Israel is brought about through the observance of its unique commandments within it. Likewise, the Shabbat day is made holy through man's sanctification as in "Remember the Shabbat day to make it holy..." The human being fulfills the command to "Be holy, for I your G-d, am holy (Leviticus 19:2)" by refraining from certain activities, by mastering one's natural tendencies, or through noble intent behind action.

Yet there are also references to an imminent holiness, one that is independent of our action either because it is inherited or inher-



ent. In this vein, Maimonides writes (in his Laws of the Temple 6:16), “why do I say that the original consecration sanctified the Temple and Jerusalem for eternity... Because the sanctity of the Temple and Jerusalem stems from the Shechinah which can never be nullified... as the Talmud declares: (Megillah 28a) ‘Even though they have been devastated, their sanctity remains.’ It is holiness within the land that, once present, can never be nullified through one’s deeds.

The same idea holds true in time and with people: there is holiness inherent within the Shabbat and festive days, irrespective of human experience or embrace. During our prayer services, the Kohanim ascend the platform to bless the congregation and utter the famous blessing which states “who has sanctified us with the holiness of Aaron”- a quality that is inherited, not earned.

To be sure, to declare that something or someone has a quality of holiness certainly does not imply that it needs to be worshiped, and no commentary within the Jewish religion would ever say such a thing. We only worship God. Yet the Biblical, legal, philosophical, and mystical sources alike speak of the dissemination of holiness over creation, and even over this world of ours, in its above mentioned dimensions of time, space, and the human being.

One of the further novelties in Jewish thought is the precise qualification of different levels and gradations of holiness. In the land of Israel, for example, the highest level was the site where the “Holy of Holies” stood. Providing the practical application in Jewish law, Maimonides writes: “the land of Israel has ten gradations of holiness, each higher than the preceding level.” Likewise, with objects, the Mishna states: “Objects used for the performance of a mitzvah may be thrown away, [since no sanctity attaches to the object after its use.] But objects which are accessories to sacred items cannot be discarded...” The highest level within these objects is the sanctity of

the Torah Scroll. The latter is a phenomenon in Jewish culture and law that we take for granted. The simple physical materials of ink and parchment, when combined to form a Torah scroll in the prescribed manner, are wondrously transformed into a “holy object” that has numerous implications in how it is handled and respected.

Indeed, this is the Jewish child’s first visual introduction to holiness.

As the Torah is carried through the aisles of the synagogue, he or she can watch as the people rise, extend their hand to kiss the Torah. The value placed on this object and the tender attention given to it is more than the wisdom than the words convey, and more than the skilled labor and materials. It is not a work of literature or art, but something mysteriously beyond.

This awareness of holiness later develops into a more academic and sophisticated discussion, but the intuitive appreciation, one that defies logic and reaches to the core, never leaves. Indeed, there are moving stories of Jews rushing into burning synagogues in Germany and Poland to save the Torah scrolls.

In conclusion, even the most rational Jewish philosophers and codifiers of law devote attention to clarifying these levels of holiness, within a concrete and logical system. This combination of the legal and rational intertwined in the ethereal and mystical is one of the beautiful aspects of Jewish thought. Finally, the complexity of the book of Leviticus, as mentioned above, sends this message to the child and adult alike. The child, innocent and pure, initially takes the holiness for granted and then learns to develop his mind, while the sophisticated adult must strip away the layers of complexity and foreign ideologies to revisit “the call” of Vayikra - to stay holy and pure in our thoughts, speech and actions. This is what the Torah requires of us as a “Holy People”.

The **upgraded kiddush** this week is sponsored by Kate Goldberg and Debbie Wolchuk in memory of their mother, Jennifer Hepker

חיה פייגל בת משה ע"ה



Shalosh Seudos this week is sponsored by the Borregard family.

### THE WEEK AHEAD

- ☑ **Pre-Pesach Breakfast and Learning with the Dallas Kollel** - Sunday, 8:45 a.m.
- ☑ **Karate with Raffi Erotas** - Sunday, 11:00 a.m.
- ☑ **Kinyan Hamasechta** - Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday at 9:00 p.m.
- ☑ **Morning kollel and Kinyan Hamasechta** - Monday-Friday, 6:10
- ☑ **Partners in Torah** - Tuesday, 8:00 p.m.
- ☑ **Prepare for Pesach with Rabbi Poupko** - Wednesday, 8:00 p.m.
- ☑ **Gemara Avoda Zarah with Rabbi Zakon** - Shabbos morning, 7:45 a.m.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ **Prepare for Pesach with Rabbi Poupko** - March 29
- ◆ **Champions / NCSY Middle School trip to Six Flags** - April 23
- ◆ **Champions / NCSY Middle School BBQ** - April 2
- ◆ **Pesach** - Evening of April 5 - April 13
- ◆ **Community Lecture from Ken Spiro** - April 20
- ◆ **Shabbaton with Rabbi Paysach Krohn** - May 5-7
- ◆ **Trivia Night** - May 21

Earlier this week, Noam Barak completed over six miles in a bike-a-thon that he organized to raise money for hachnasat kallah. Through his efforts he raised nearly \$500, but he is still shy of his goal. To contribute, please contact Noam by calling or texting his mom at 469.226.7796 or give directly to Eyal Barak. All proceeds will go directly to a kallah in need.



There is a very strong custom of “Kimcha D’Pischa”, giving tzedakah to those in need before Pesach to help with the large expenses associated with the chag. Rabbi Zakon is collecting money for families in our community who need help. If you’d like to participate, please see Rabbi Zakon during the coming week.

The coat room will be completely emptied this week in preparation for cleaning it for Pesach. This includes the contents of the cubbies and drawers. Please remove all of your items temporarily after Shabbos.

## What's New?

**Prepare for Pesach**  
with Rabbi Poupko

Wednesday, March 22 - Pesach Prep  
Wednesday, March 29 - Seder Prep

**On Zoom | 8:00 P.M.**

**Why the Jews?**

Understanding the recent uptick in Anti-Semitism, and what to do about it.

Speaker  
**Ken Spiro**

**20 April** | 8:00 P.M.  
3251 Independence Parkway, Plano

**REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED**

Register at [www.dataofplano.org](http://www.dataofplano.org)  
Suggested donation - \$15

*Save the Date!*

DATA of PLANO presents a

**Shabbos of Stories**

WITH **Rabbi Paysach Krohn**

**MAY 5th - 6th 2023**

DATA OF PLANO | 3251 Independence Parkway, Plano, TX 75075 | [info@dataofplano.org](mailto:info@dataofplano.org)



## Sunday Morning with the Dallas

*Kollel*

This Sunday morning, March 26, the Dallas kollel will join us in Plano for a special men's **learning session**, studying the fascinating discussion of **leaning during the seder on Pesach**.

It's a great way to prepare for Pesach, and to get to know the **kollel rabbis**. Breakfast will be served.

8:00 - Shacharis | 8:40 - Breakfast

9:00 - Learning | 9:40 - Shiur/Discussion with Rabbi Rosenshein