

Dvar Torah for Parshat Terumah

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Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Terumot u'Maasrot* 3:8

“Fifty loops you will make on one awning, and fifty loops you will make on the edge of the other awning...The loops are to be parallel one another, one corresponding to the other” (Exodus 26:5).

Take a guess. What is it that optimizes the vocation of *kedushah* (holiness, sacredness)? Is it hanging around, doing this and that and waiting for a miracle? Poof! You’re holy. Is it running, running, running, trying to squeeze a zillion mitzvahs into every minute of your life, forcing your way into *kedushah* ? Or is it doing as much Jewish “stuff”—Torah study, prayer and acts of kindness—as you humanly can, and then waiting to be invited “inside”? If you choose the last option, you are correct.

Let’s explain. Certainly casually hanging around, contemplating how nice Judaism is, and how good it would be to be a tzaddik is untenable. To be human means to have a goal in life and to work towards that goal. The second choice has a certain initial attraction. There’s a certain satisfaction

(not smugness!) that comes from doing mitzvahs. Mitzvahs are holy and can bestow a holiness which leads to Godliness. But an overheated pursuit of mitzvahs, even, or perhaps especially, in order to be holy and Godly, is dangerous. What is the danger? Burn out

When a person is on fire for Jewishness he, or she, will work tirelessly for some perceived degree of perfection. Sometimes, the sheer physical effort tires out the mind. As a result, one misweighs the relative importance of various mitzvahs and of different Jewish values. In fact, one may literally lose his mind, God forbid. For others, the pursuit of perfection is all or nothing. But perfection doesn't come so fast. It doesn't come when we think it should. It takes years and years of dedicated effort. And then—what most of us know, but the perfectionist does not—because we're human and we can never be perfect, our multiple successes in coming closer are perceived as failure. So one takes his drive to be a tzaddik, makes a u-turn and misdedicates it to anti-holiness, God forbid.

So optimizing the vocation of *kedushah* is to aim for the deepest, inner-most point of holiness you can conceive and to acknowledge that you may get there only if you get special permission, or only on a special occasion, or—maybe never at all. And that not getting there may be due to no fault of your own. It's just that you have no business at your assumed goal. Being there is not your mission. Being at the gate, or at even some “lesser” station, may be what's wanted from you.

The awnings of the Mishkan (Tabernacle) were attached by the hooks connecting the loops. The curtain that separated the Kodesh (the Holy) from the Kodesh HaKadashim (Holy of Holies, or Most Holy) was suspended from the hooks. That curtain is there to teach us to keep the fire of holy desire burning, but under control. If we do that, the Fifty Gates of Taharah (purity, represented by the loops of the inner awnings), defeat the Fifty Gates of Tumah (impurity, represented by the loops of the outer awnings). The captive good of the latter is

freed, making One Hundred Gates of Blessing. Amen.

agutn Shabbos!

Shabbat Shalom!

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