



Dvar Torah for Parshat Kedoshim

Based on Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #116

"You shall be holy for I, God, am holy...love your fellow Jew as yourself; I am God" (Leviticus 19:1–18).

Everybody knows that being holy means praying a lot, learning a lot of Torah and being scrupulous in ritual observance. That also. In fact, this is the easier aspect of holiness.

But there is another aspect of holiness, one that's harder to attain and maintain, the aspect which involves human interaction: being generous, helpful, offering honest advice; paying employees on time; not lying, cheating or stealing; giving others the benefit of the doubt; no gossiping, taking revenge or bearing grudges. In other words, being an honest, decent human being, even when you have to deal with people are annoying, wearying, dishonest or disingenuous.

However, for the holiness to kick in, you've got to follow these common-sense rules for getting along with others for the right reason. The right reason is *not* because it's the ethical way to behave or the ethical thing to do. The right reason is *because God said so*. They are mitzvot.

A man was once speaking to the Rebbe, praising another for his good character. He said that the other was *erintlakh*—ethical. The Rebbe replied that a Jew is not called ethical. Others may have a morality determined by common sense and fairness and they can be called "ethical." But the Jews are a holy people. We have oral commandments that are logical and fair, but these are not mere ethics.

Our Creator gave us a Torah. We keep the commandments because they were decreed by God and not for any logical or moral reasons. A Jew may be called Godly, but never merely "ethical."

It is written in the words of King David, "The way of Your mitzvot I will run" (Psalms 119:32). There are commandments and customs that involve morality. These are a way of life. King David calls them "the way." One would follow these ways on the basis of ethical fairness alone. For example, an ethical person would abstain from stealing even without a Divine commandment.

King David spoke of such mitzvot called "the way." He said of them "of Your mitzvot I will run." I will not keep these commandments because they are moral, but because they are "Your commandments." It is for this reason that I run to keep them.

"The way" includes commandments that are ethically logical. But I do not follow "the way" because it is proper and ethical. "The way of Your commandments I will run"—I run to keep them because You decreed them in Your Torah.

The Talmud teaches us, "Only the Jews go by the name 'Adam.'" In Hebrew "The way of Your commandments I will run" is *Derekh Mitzvotekha Arutz*. The first letters of these words are an acronym for *ADaM*.

A genuine man is in the category of Adam. He does not keep a moral code because it is logical or ethical, but because it is decreed by God. Israel is a holy people and its moral code consists of the commandments of the Torah. Therefore, Israel alone goes by the name "Adam." For *ADaM* is *Derekh Mitzvotekha Arutz*.