

## Sermon by Rabbi Eliezer Hirsch

### Acharei Mot-Kedoshim 5.1.20 “Any Day”

Good Shabbos. Shabbat Shalom. We have a number of community announcements; unfortunately, most of them are not the happy kind of news. But on the bright side, congratulations to Mekor member Rena Asher upon her engagement to Yona Remer. Mazal tov!

Now for the not-so-bright side. We are saddened to inform the Mekor Habracha community of the passing of Sue Kirzner (Sarah bat Binyamin Hakohen) z'l, mother of Mekor member Barry Kirzner.

Of the passing of Fredrick Letzter (Ephraim ben Yitzchak) z'l, father of Mekor member Ed Letzter.

Of the passing of Harris Risman, (Chaim Uriah ben Yaakov) z'l, brother of Mekor member Marjie Risman.

Of the passing of Henrique Stobiecki (Ari ben Moshe) z'l, father of Mekor member Karen Stobiecki Setton.

And of the passing Miriam Meyer z'l, grandmother of Mekor member Talya Laufer. May Barry, Rachel, Marjie, Ed, Karen, Henrique, Talya, Chesky, and families be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem, and may we share only good news going forward.

In this week's double parsha, the first section of the first parsha, Acharei Mot, is the portion we read from the Torah on Yom Kippur morning. It describes the service that we are commanded to perform annually on Yom Kippur.

However, that portion begins by saying that this service was initially held on the date when the children of Aaron, Nadav and Aviyu, died – *Acharei mot*. That event occurred on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Nisan, the date when the mishkan was dedicated, not on Yom Kippur.

So contrary to a common misconception, this section did **not** originate as a Yom Kippur service. On the contrary, it was created for the mishkan dedication. Only at the end, after describing the service done on Rosh Chodesh Nisan, does the

Torah tell us, וְהִיְתָה לָכֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּעֶשְׂרֵי לַחֹדֶשׁ תַּעֲנֶנּוּ אֶת־נִפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם וְכָל־ מְלֶאכֶה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ:

That you should perform this same service for the dedication of the Mishkan on Yom Kippur as well.

Yom Kippur may be a special day, but the service isn't exclusive to Yom Kippur, which teaches us that Yom Kippur itself isn't original and thus can be replicated on other days. I think this is the reason why the name of the Mesechet that describes Yom Kippur is referred to a *Yoma*, which simply means *day* as in *any day*!

Even though the 10 days of teshuva are set aside as a special time, Rebbe Eliezer in the gemara in Mesechet Shabbat 153a says we should have the attitude of *shuv yom echad lifnei mitatecha*, to do teshuva *one day before you die*. Rebbe Eliezer's students asked him, how can you know when you're going to die? Rabbi Eliezer's answer warrants discussion, but the basic answer is that of course, you cannot know, so *every day* is a potential Yom Kippur/day of teshuva for each of us. Another striking example is that a couple's wedding day is considered their personal Yom Kippur, because *Yoma*, any day you choose can become your own Yom Kippur. The couple therefore has the ability to create their own personal day of holiness.

And the marriage ring ceremony is called *kiddushin*, which comes from *Kedusha holy*, the name of our second parsha, *Kedoshim*. And we find this lesson in *Parshat Kedoshim* as well. *Kedoshim* has seemingly random numerous rules for daily living and about how to treat others: don't steal, don't speak lashon hara, don't hate other people, protect someone who may be vulnerable to a scam, give charity, honor the elderly, do not hold grudges or take revenge, love your neighbor, respect your parents, keep Shabbat, and worship no idols.

In other words, parshat *Kedoshim* is teaching us that based on your choices to behave a certain way, you can create holiness every day of your life.

I think this message is particularly meaningful during the Omer. There are 4 modern holidays during this period: Yom Hashoah, Yom Hazikaron, Yom Ha'atzma'ut, and Yom Yerushalayim. These are days we created ourselves, and their relevance depends on your persuasion – some Jewish groups believe they

should be observed, and some do not. But by choosing to observe each of these days, you personally align yourself with the newly discovered holiness of the day – with honoring Holocaust survivors, our fallen soldiers of tzahal, and celebrating Israel and Jerusalem. While there may be disagreements about the details of observance, we should focus on the fact that we are living the ongoing saga of Jewish history. These holidays can inspire each one of us to ask what we can do personally to make the day holy, and inspire us to make every day a *Yoma*, a day that is special. Shabbat shalom.