



Pathways to Holiness
Torah Reflections on *Parashat Kedoshim*
Leviticus 16:1 – 20:27

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Our Torah portion makes a remarkable claim: Kedusha – holiness, can be found in the mundane as well as the sublime. Throughout the portion we encounter a myriad of seemingly disparate mitzvot including: revere your parents; observe the Sabbath; love your neighbor as yourself; and be mindful of what you wear and what you eat.

One of these pathways to holiness is called *pe'ah*. The mitzvah of *pe'ah* (corner) is fulfilled at harvest time when a farmer leaves a corner of the field's crop for the poor. Each year, s/he decides how large this corner will be. Although today most of us aren't directly involved with agriculture, let's take a moment to look at some contemporary expressions and applications of this mitzvah.

One way that this is relevant is that it sheds light on the topic of unfinished business. There are times in our life when despite our best efforts to harvest our crop illness strikes, our plans are derailed, and we are prevented from enjoying the crop – the fruits of our labor. Our hopes and our dreams may lie in a raw or unfinished state. Projects into which we invested great time and energy are left decaying, or waiting for someone else to step in and complete. Perhaps though, this is exactly as God intended it to be. After all, God brought us into an unfinished world and invited us to improve a small corner of it. Can we accept that God desired to create an incomplete world? Can we accept our own inability to complete certain tasks in our routine and our life?

Another perspective on the relevance of this mitzvah emerges when looking at it from the viewpoint of a person dependent on others for assistance. Understanding that holiness is expressed in this world through the performance of *tzedakah*, is it possible to view the recipient of the *tzedakah* as an equal partner in the fulfillment of this

mitzvah? When I am in physical or emotional distress, can I make myself into a vehicle for this holiness, a charitable recipient? Am I accepting of the love, care and concern that is being extended to me? Can I find even a small corner of myself that is open to setting aside my pride and receiving what others are offering me?

I end with a prayer that each of us be blessed with knowing that offering help and being open to accepting the support of others are true pathways to holiness.

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This Torah Reflection was written by Rabbi Daniel Coleman, BCC, Staff Chaplain at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, NY. The Torah Reflections series is published by the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center (a beneficiary of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties), an affiliate of the Institute on Aging. More information and healing-oriented resources can be found at www.JewishHealingCenter.org.



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