

Parshas Kedoshim  
Rav Michel Barenbaum's Schmooze on  
Countless Opportunities to Sanctify the Ordinary  
By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

The Torah tells us in Vayikra 19:2 that we have to be holy. There is a well known difference between Rashi and Ramban in how to understand this expression. Rashi says it means to separate from immorality and all sin. Ramban says that even without doing anything outright wrong we can still fall short of the Torah's demand to be holy. An example of this would be to overeat even if the food itself meets the highest Kashrus standards. We have to live our entire lives in a holy manner befitting avdai Hashem.

The Mashgiach, Rav Michel Barenbaum, Zt'l, explained this idea of sanctifying the permitted in one of his mussar Shmuessim. He quoted the Gra who explains a contradiction between two Gemaras. The Gemara at the end of Kesubos tells us that Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi had no pleasure in this world that was not leshaim Shamayim. In Avoda Zara 11a the Gemara tells us that Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi had all of the luxury foods of his time at his table. The Gra explained that while Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi did indeed have all of the luxury foods at his table he made sure to only have enjoyment from them totally leshaim Shamayim. This was an amazing accomplishment to be able to enjoy physical pleasures leshaim Shamayim; this is actually more difficult than simply fasting.

The Mashgiach then quoted Rabbi Yisroel Salanter's statement on the high spiritual level that was potentially available to a shoemaker. The shoemaker can have in mind all of the Mitzvos and chesed that can be done by the wearer of these shoes. The Saba of Kelm elaborated even further on this idea. The Saba of Kelm stated that it is indeed a shame the average baker loses so many Mitzvos. Most bakers are only thinking of the profits that will be made from the sale of the breads and cakes. If he would only think of all of the chesed that could be done with his wares to feed hungry people and the strength it will give every eater of his baked goods to do Hashem's Mitzvos. Sadly, so many Mitzvos are constantly lost this way. Along this line of thought, the Saba of Kelm was known to eat bony fish at the end of a fast day to make sure that he ate leshaim Shamayim and not because he was hungry from the fast.

The Mashgiach, Zt'l, explained that *Naval birshus hatora*, the lowlife with the letter of the Torah's law that the Ramban speaks about in the following way. It states in Shir Hashirim[4:3], 'Your temple is like a of a pomegranate which Chazal explain to mean that even the simple Jew has many Mitzvos like the mass of seeds in a pomegranate. Chazal used the expression for simple *Raikanim* which literally means empty ones. The empty ones can be understood to mean those who do the Mitzvos without the right thoughts and intentions. Surely, they will receive reward for the Mitzvos that were done. But imagine how many more Mitzvos could have been put to their credit had they entertained different thoughts. We can learn from all of this not to lose countless opportunities not to sanctify the ordinary. By sanctifying our daily lives, we can be Kedoshim as Hashem commands us.