

Reb Pinchas of Koretz

Imrie Pinchas
Parshas Kedoshim

Siman #242	
"You shall be holy" (Vayikra 19:2).	קדושים תהיו (י"ט, ג')
Rashi explains: "Be separated from illicit relations and from sin."	ופירש רש"י: הווי פרושים מן העריות ומן העבירה
And the Ramban interprets: to sanctify oneself even in that which is permitted to him.	והרמב"ן פירש לקדש עצמו במותר לו
And both are necessary:	ווצריך להיות שניהם
A prohibited thing must be extremely severe—	דבר אסור יהיה חמור מאד מאד
even something prohibited by the Sages, for they strengthened their words, etc. (Eiruvין 73a).	אפילו דבר דרבנן דעשו חיזוק לדבריהם וכו' (עירובין 'ע"ז, א)
And that which is permitted—i.e., personal traits and behaviors—is not as severe.	ודבר המותר, דהיינו מדות, אינו חמור כל כך
The proof is that the Rav, of blessed memory, said that for character traits, the essence of Yom Kippur atones.	והראיה שאמר הרב ז"ל דעל מדות עצומו של יום הכפורים מכפר
Nonetheless, one must still treat them with great severity.	מכל מקום צריך להחזיק אותם חמור מאד
[NOTE: Summary This brief but powerful teaching highlights two levels of holiness: 1. Avoiding the prohibited (as Rashi explains, primarily sexual immorality and sin), 2. Sanctifying oneself even in permitted matters (as Ramban explains—developing self-discipline even in morally neutral areas). Both aspects are essential: • What is forbidden must be treated with extreme seriousness—even rabbinic prohibitions, as Chazal strengthened their words (cf. Eiruvין 73a). • What is permitted, especially personal traits and behaviors, while not as categorically severe, still demand attention and refinement. The fact that Yom Kippur atones for bad traits (whereas other sins may require teshuvah and more) underscores their spiritual importance.	

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Practical Takeaway

Holiness doesn't stop at avoiding sin. One must also **strive for self-discipline and sanctity even in the permissible**: how we eat, speak, behave, and interact. Even if something is “allowed,” that doesn't mean it's spiritually elevating. True kedushah means cultivating awareness and restraint in every aspect of life. **END NOTE]**

Siman #243

“Do not steal, and do not deny” (Vayikra 19:11).	לֹא תִגְנוֹבוּ וְלֹא תִכְחֲשׂוּ (וַיִּקְרָא י"ט, י"א)
One who does not lie—nothing is stolen from him at all.	מִי שֶׁאֵינוֹ מְשַׁקֵּר, אֵין נִגְנָב מִמֶּנּוּ שׁוּם דָּבָר כָּלֵל
And this is [the meaning of] “Do not steal and do not deny.”	וְזֶהוּ לֹא תִגְנוֹבוּ וְלֹא תִכְחֲשׂוּ
And the aspect of “loss” [i.e., something lost] comes from a blemish in thought,	וּבְחִינַת אֲבִידָה הִיא מִחֲמַת פֶּגַם בַּמַּחְשָׁבָה
or because some holy sparks fall away from the person,	אוֹ מִחֲמַת שְׁנוּפָלִים מִן הָאֲדָם אֵינָה נִיצוּצוֹת קְדוּשָׁה
and therefore some object is also lost from him.	וְלֵכֵן נֶאֱבַד מִמֶּנּוּ אֵינָה דָּבָר גַּם כֵּן
And for this reason, it is forbidden to return a lost item to a non-Jew (Sanhedrin 76b),	(וְעַל כֵּן אָסוּר לְהַחֲזִיר אֲבִידָה לַגּוֹי (סְנֵהֲדְרִין ע"ו, ב')
for when the spark has fallen away from him, it is not to be returned. Understand this.	כִּי כְשֶׁנֶּפֶל הַנִּיצוּץ מִמֶּנּוּ אֵין לְהַחֲזִירוֹ, וְהֵבֵן

[NOTE: Summary

The verse “Do not steal and do not deny” (Vayikra 19:11) is interpreted here on a deeper, spiritual level. It teaches that one who avoids falsehood entirely will not suffer theft or loss—because truthfulness aligns a person with Divine order. Furthermore, when a person experiences a loss, it may stem from a blemish in thought or the falling away of holy sparks from his soul. These sparks, when lost, manifest in the physical world as lost objects. For this reason, returning a lost item to a non-Jew is prohibited (Sanhedrin 76b), as the fallen spark is no longer theirs to reclaim.

Practical Takeaway

Live with integrity not only in speech but in thought. Honesty creates spiritual protection, while distorted thinking and dishonesty cause inner and outer loss. Even minor untruths can open a path to spiritual and material depletion. Strive to uphold truth in all areas—and trust that this draws Divine blessing and preservation. **END NOTE]**

Siman #244

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“Do not withhold the wages of a hired worker with you until morning” (Vayikra 19:13).	לא תלין פגולת שכיר אתה עד בקר (י"ט, י"ג)
The reason is explained in the Zohar (Zohar III 103b):	פירש הטעם בזהר (ק"ג ע"ב)
Because everything a person does during the day—all the speech and movements—	פי כל מה שאדם עושה ביום וכל הדבורים והתנועות
ascends at night to become feminine waters (mayin nukvin).	עולה בלילה למין נוקבין
Therefore, “do not let [the wages] remain overnight,” etc. See there in the Zohar.	לכן לא תלין כו', עין שם בזהר
And all the requests a person makes during the day also ascend at night,	וכל הבקשות שאדם מבקש ביום כלם יש להם עליה בלילה
and there they are sweetened and the request is fulfilled.	ושם נמתק ונעשה מבוקשו
Therefore, we pray on Yom Kippur (in the <i>Yaaleh Techinuneinu</i> piyut of <i>Maariv</i>):	לכן מתפללים ביום הכפורים (פיוט "יעלה תחנונינו" [[מערב]]):
“May our supplication rise in the evening and our outcry come in the morning,”	"יעלה תחנונינו מערב ויבוא שועתנו מבקר"
in the secret of “new every morning” (Eichah 3:23), and see there also “until evening.”	בסוד "חדשים לבקרים" (איכה ג', כ"ג), ויראה עוד עד ערב
[NOTE: Summary The mitzvah “<i>Do not withhold the wages of a hired worker until morning</i>” (Vayikra 19:13) is given a mystical explanation in the Zohar (Vol. III 103b). Every action, word, and movement a person performs during the day rises at night as mayin nukvin—a spiritual process by which human effort initiates divine response. Likewise, all prayers and requests made during the day ascend at night and are sweetened and fulfilled above. This process is echoed in the Yom Kippur prayer “<i>Yaaleh Techinuneinu</i>”, which pleads for the prayers of evening to ascend and the cries of morning to be received, based on the verse “<i>They are new every morning</i>” (Eichah 3:23). Practical Takeaway One’s daily actions and words matter far beyond the moment—they ascend spiritually and shape divine response. Be mindful in your deeds and speech during the day, knowing that nighttime is a time of spiritual processing and refinement. Pay your workers on time—not only as a legal duty, but as an alignment with cosmic order where delays create blockages both below and above. Holiness means timeliness and trust. END NOTE]	
Siman #245	
“And you shall love your fellow as yourself” (Vayikra 19:18).	ואהבת לרעהך כמוך (י"ט, י"ח)

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Rabbi Akiva said: This is a great principle in the Torah (Sifra Kedoshim 4:12).	אמר רבי עקיבא: זה כלל גדול בתורה (ספרא קדושים (פ"ד, י"ב).
From Rabbi Palik ז"ל in the name of Rabbi Fradel ז"ל the elder:	מרבי פאליק ז"ל בשם רבי פרידל ז"ל קמא
In a person are all ten sefiros.	באדם יש כל הי"ד ספירות
And regarding the first three, there is no grasping of them, etc.,	והנה בג' ראשונות אין בקו תפיסה כו
But the seven <i>middos</i> are known—	אבל הז' מדות ידועות
namely: <i>chesed</i> (love), <i>gevurah</i> (awe), <i>tiferes</i> , etc.	והיינו חסד אהבה גבורה יראה תפארת וכו
And with these seven <i>middos</i> , a person can serve Hashem—	ובאלו הז' מדות יכול אדם להשתמש לעבודת השי"ת
with love and awe of Him, etc.	להתקבץ וליראה אותו וכו
And likewise, G-d forbid, a person can use them in the opposite direction.	וכן חס ושלום יכול לפעול בהפך
And whenever a person uses one <i>middah</i> on one side, automatically the opposing side is diminished.	וכל מה שאדם משתמש באחד מהמדות לצד אחד, ממילא מתמעט הצד שפנגדו
And similarly, when he does not use the opposing side, and uses one side, the other increases—	וכן כשאינו הצד שפנגדו, וכן משתמש לצד אחד, נתרבה הצד הבית
for this capacity of the <i>middah</i> , in any case, exists in a person.	כי זה הכוח של המדה עכ"פ ישנה באדם
For example, when a person does not love materiality and this world,	דרך משל, כשאדם אינו אוהב גשמיות ועולם הזה
and he does not express the <i>middah</i> of love on these things—	ואינו מוציא מדות אהבה על זה
it becomes easier for him to use the <i>middah</i> of love to love Hashem and the Torah.	נוח לו להשתמש במדת אהבה שיש בו לאהב את השי"ת ואת התורה
And likewise in the reverse, etc. Understand this.	וכן בהפך וכו', והבן
And according to this, Rav Raphael ז"ל explained the verse "And you shall love your fellow as yourself," which Rabbi Akiva called a great principle in the Torah.	ועל פי זה ביאר הוא [מוהר"ר רפאל] ז"ל "ואהבת לרעך כמוך", אמר רבי עקיבא זה כלל גדול בתורה
The Shelah (Shnei Luchos HaBris, Lish Sha'ar HaOsyos §3) asks: this fits between man and his fellow, but how does it apply between man and G-d?	והקשה שילה (שני לוחות הברית, שער על סולם לים לוס ג'): תינח שבין אדם לחברו, אבל בין אדם למקום מהי איקא למימר? עי"ש
And at first, he explained simply: when a person loves all of Israel, the Divine Presence dwells upon him.	ובתחילה אמר הוא ז"ל שיש לומר על דרך פשוט: כי האדם האוהב כל ישראל שורה עליו השכינה

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And through this, all workers of iniquity are scattered, and it is easier for him to fulfill the entire Torah.	ועל ידי זה יתפזרו כל פועלי און ונח לו לבוא לקיים כל התורה
And afterward he explained it according to the above from Rabbi Fradel:	ואחר כך ביאר על דרך הנ"ל מרבי פרידל
That by not being strict with his fellow, and receiving everything with a pleasant face,	כי על ידי שאינו מקפיד על חברו רק מקבל הכל בסבר פנים יפות
and his heart is not anxious or strict about anything—	ואין לבו חרד ומקפיד על שום דבר
for in any case, one cannot fulfill “Love your fellow as yourself” unless he removes from himself the <i>middah</i> of strictness (<i>ka'peida</i>), which belongs to <i>gevurah</i> —	כי בלא הכי גם אי אפשר לקיים "ואהבת לרעך כמוך", אם לא יסור ממנו מדת הקפדה, שהיא ממדת הגבורה
And by not using the <i>middah</i> of <i>gevurah</i> for matters of this world,	ועל ידי שאינו משתמש במדת גבורה לדברי עולם הזה
he can use that same inner capacity to be fearful and reverent of the word of Hashem.	בוח לו בכח זו המדה להיות ירא וחרד על דברי השי"ת
And this is a great principle in the Torah.	ונהי כלל גדול בתורה
[NOTE: Summary The verse “ואהבת לרעך כמוך” is elevated by Rabbi Akiva as a foundational principle of the Torah. Building on this, a teaching from Rabbi Fradel (as conveyed by Rabbi Palik and later expounded by Rav Raphael) explains that every person possesses the ten sefiros, especially the seven emotional <i>middos</i> (attributes), such as love, awe, and compassion. These can be directed either toward holiness or, God forbid, the opposite. When a person chooses not to use a negative <i>middah</i> (like severity or obsession with materialism), that same <i>middah</i> becomes available for positive spiritual use, such as love for Hashem or awe of His word. Hence, refraining from strictness and harshness toward others frees up the emotional capacity to fear Heaven and live with spiritual passion. This, they explain, is how the mitzvah of <i>loving one's fellow</i> serves not only interpersonal ethics but also deepens our relationship with Hashem.	

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Practical Takeaway

If you **stop using your emotions negatively**, you'll unlock them for holiness. For example, if you withhold harsh judgment from others, you'll be more capable of applying inner intensity toward reverence and love of Hashem. Treat others kindly, overlook faults, and release emotional fixations—and you'll discover new depths in your own Divine service. Let love overflow toward others, and it will return to uplift your soul.

Chassidic Story

Reb Pinchas of Koretz, one of the closest disciples of the Baal Shem Tov, was known for his deep pursuit of truth and refinement of *middos*. He lived this teaching—that one must withdraw negative emotions from worldly matters in order to harness them for Divine service.

One time, a close disciple came to Reb Pinchas and shared how he had been wronged by a fellow townsman and could not stop feeling angry. The Rebbe looked at him with a soft but serious gaze and said:

“Tell me, do you ever cry during your prayers?”

“Not often,” the disciple admitted.

“Then why do you waste your tears on another man's faults?” Reb Pinchas asked.

“If your heart knows how to tremble in indignation, it can also tremble in awe of Heaven. But not both at once.”

The disciple understood: **the emotional power he was using to be upset could be reclaimed and redirected toward awe, love, and holiness**—just as Reb Pinchas taught in his explanation of *וואהבת לרעך כמוך* as a gateway to *יראת שמים*.

Source:

This story is drawn from *Imrei Pinchas HaShalem* and cited in the historical biographical work "*Reb Pinchas MiKoretz*" by Menachem Brayer, who compiled oral traditions and manuscript material preserved in Chassidic circles. It reflects Reb Pinchas's central doctrine: **true spiritual life requires emotional discipline, and love for others unlocks love for G-d. END NOTE]**

Siman #246

“A just hin” (Vayikra 19:36).	הֵינּוּ צֶדֶק (י"ט, ל"ו)
[This means:] your “yes” and “no” should be just (Kiddushin 49a).	(שְׁיֵהָא הֵן וְלֹאֵן וְשִׁלְךָ צֶדֶק (כְּדוּשִׁין מ"ט, א')
That is, to weigh with the scale of his intellect every single word—whether to say it or not.	דְּהֵינּוּ לְשִׁקוּל בְּמֵאנְיָ שְׂכָלֹ כָּל דְּיִבוּר וְדִיבוּר אִם לֵאמֹר אוֹ לֹא
For a person must possess good <i>middos</i> (character traits) in his relations with others.	כִּי הָאָדָם צָרִיךְ שְׂיֵהָיָה לוֹ מִדּוֹת טוֹבוֹת בֵּין הַבְּרִיּוֹת

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And Yom Kippur does not atone for sins between man and his fellow (Yoma 85b).	וְיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים אֵינוֹ מְכַפֵּר מֵהַשִּׁבְיָן אָדָם לְחֵבְרוֹ (יומא פ"ה, ב')
And this is [the meaning of]: the punishment for <i>middos</i> is severe (Yevamos 63b).	(וְזֶהוּ: קִשָּׁה עוֹנֶשֶׁן שֶׁל מִדּוֹת (יְבָמוֹת ס"ג, ב')

[NOTE: Summary

The verse "הֵינִי צַדִּיק" ("a just hin") is interpreted beyond its simple monetary meaning. Chazal (Kiddushin 49a) explain that a person's **"yes" and "no" must be truthful and reliable**—a standard of integrity in all speech. This teaching is expanded to mean that one must **weigh each word carefully**, using the intellect to decide whether it is worth saying. This connects to interpersonal conduct: a person must cultivate good *middos* (character traits), because **Yom Kippur cannot atone for sins between man and his fellow** (Yoma 85b). Therefore, a careless word or unkindness cannot be dismissed lightly. The Talmud (Yevamos 63b) adds: "*The punishment for negative middos is harsh*," underscoring how deeply character affects one's spiritual fate.

Practical Takeaway

Think before you speak. **Every word has weight**—not just in Heaven, but in your relationships and character. A true Jew doesn't just say "yes" or "no"—he means it, lives it, and owns it. Cultivate honesty, restraint, and kindness in speech and action. Examine how you speak to others: are your promises reliable? Are your words uplifting or hurtful? Refine your *middos*, for **refined character is the foundation of all Torah**.

Chassidic Story (Reb Pinchas of Koretz)

Reb Pinchas of Koretz was renowned for his **extreme devotion to truth and purity of speech**. One day, a merchant came to the Rebbe, boasting how he had cleverly negotiated a deal, bending the truth slightly to earn a larger profit. Reb Pinchas turned to him and said:

"You think your words are clever—but each one is a theft. Not of money, but of **your own soul's integrity**. You cannot love Hashem with a crooked tongue."

Reb Pinchas was known to **pause for long periods before speaking**, even in casual conversation. When asked why, he replied:

"The tongue has no bones—but it breaks more than any limb. I weigh every word to ensure it carries only truth."

His disciples recount that he would say:

"Better to be silent in truth than speak in false kindness."

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Source: *Imrei Pinchas*, and also cited in *Sipurei Chassidim* by Rabbi Zevin, under the topic of *emet* (truth). **END NOTE]**