

Ach/Ked

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Of no one other than the Ramban seems to have the question, which is, why command the Jewish People to be holy in the *middle* of *Sefer Vayikra* when it should have been the introduction to the *sefer* itself? The entire book is about being holy, so the *mitzvah* should have either introduced the *sefer* or concluded it. Putting it in the middle of the *sefer* seems "*nisht ahin nisht aher*" (neither here nor there).

The Ramban famously answers that the *mitzvah* is where it is to head off a mistaken assumption that a Jew only has to avoid that which is forbidden, as per the previous *parshios*. But as long as the food or act is not forbidden by the Torah, you can do whatever you want, what the Ramban calls being a "*menuval b'reshus HaTorah*," disgusting with the permission of the Torah. "Be holy" says what came before was to make you "*kosher*." What follows now is to make you holy.

Really? A person would actually think like that after scrupulously fulfilling all the laws of *kashrus* and impurity? Not usually, but that doesn't mean that it can't happen unconsciously, as the following story shows:

Rebi Elazar *bar* Rebi Shimon came from Migdal Gedor and his teacher's house and was riding on a donkey along the riverbank. He was very happy, and his head was swollen with pride because he had studied much Torah. He came across a very ugly person who said: "Greetings to you, my rebi."

Rebi Elazar did not return his greeting. Instead, Rebi Elazar said to him: "Worthless person, how ugly is that man. Are all the people of your city as ugly as you?"

The man said to him: "I do not know, but you should go and tell the Craftsman who made me how ugly the vessel is You made!"

When Rebi Elazar realized that he had sinned, he got off his donkey and prostrated himself before him and said to the man: "I have sinned against you...forgive me." (*Ta'anis* 20a)

Among the things we learn from this story, one of them is how crafty the *yetzer hara* can be. It doesn't just kick a person when they're down. It can also trip them when they're up. The *yetzer hara* is not particular about how it fools a person, just as long as the method works.

This is why God was compelled to warn the Jewish People entering *Eretz Yisroel* for the first time about becoming overconfident from their success on the land. He wasn't talking about Jews abandoning Torah and *mitzvos* because of their success, though that would eventually happen. He was talking about Jews who kept Torah and still found a way to become desensitized to the ultimate goals of Torah...because of their success.

Because the word "b'reshus" can also mean "jurisdiction" of something, Rebi Elazar *bar* Rebi Shimon had been com-

pletely absorbed in the world of Torah at the time he erred and, in a sense, sinned right under its nose, so-to-speak. Rebi Akiva's students whom we mourn during this part of the sefirah died because of the lack of respect they showed one another *while* learning. Countless times I have seen drivers commit offenses against others while rushing to do a *mitzvah*, like making dovening on time. The examples of the same thing are plenty.

That's why we learn *Pirkei Avos* specifically between Pesach and Shavuot on our way to *Kabbalas HaTorah*. The contents are the soul of the matter, but the vessel that contains them is hugely important because it can spoil the contents, as Rebi Yehoshua ben Chananyah told the daughter of the caesar. A gold container is more beautiful than a ceramic one, but it will ruin the wine inside of it whereas the ceramic container will preserve it.

Pirkei Avos doesn't work on the "wine" instead. The counting of the *omer* does that. It works on the *keli*, the "vessel" for the soul by emphasizing the need for *middos* refinement, enhancement of our character traits. That is what the Ramban is telling us...that we can't assume that we're all rectified because we obey what we can and can't do. We have to go a big step beyond so that we won't make the mistake that so many have made throughout history, becoming a *menuval b'reshus HaTorah* without even knowing it.

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Speaking of personal rectification, I will be teaching SHA'AR HAGILGULIM b"H over six weeks starting on April 27. To register, go to: <https://www.paypal.com/ncp/payment/NYK2EB26DQ9XG>. More information: [Acharei-Kedoshim 5786](https://www.shaar-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

nunproductions.org/Shar-HaGilgulim-Course.html.

Have a great Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston