

"Speak to the entire congregation of Yisrael and tell them, holy you shall be, for I am holy." (19:2)

This *parsha* occupies a critical position not only in Sefer Vayikra, but, even more significantly, in the entire *Torah*. Indeed, *Chazal* state that the majority of the essentials of the *Torah* are summarized in this *parsha*. Its central imperative is Hashem's charge to *Klal Yisrael* over all generations, *Be Holy and Sanctified!* It is not sufficient to be a pious individual, one must also dedicate his entire life to achieving the lofty and elusive goal of holiness. The motivation for this command is simply "*For I am holy.*"

Man should not simply worship Hashem; he is to imitate His quality of holiness. Obviously, man can not exactly mirror Hashem, but he can and should strive towards attaining purity that is Divine in nature. Man is enjoined to manifest G-dliness through his own actions. This holiness represents the highest goal man can strive to achieve.

How does one struggle to attain this state of purity? The preceding *parsha* concluded with the laws dealing with *arayos* (forbidden unions). *Chazal* take note of this juxtaposition with the following statement, "*This is to teach you that wherever you find barriers to immorality, you coincidentally find sanctity.*" Restraint in areas of morality is a prerequisite of this key to holiness! Few laws are as replete with fences and barriers, protective laws, as *arayos*. Nowhere are these protective laws more urgently required than for the task of avoiding *vurg*. Only when we observe the guidelines of these protective barriers can we achieve and maintain holiness. Moral depravity evolves from a lack of adherence to the preventative laws which are most commonly associated with *arayos*. It is crucial that we maintain the highest degree of moral purity in our homes, our schools, and our daily endeavor. These basic protective laws serve as prerequisites for striving towards the goal of holiness. In addition, they are also a determining factors in distinguishing oneself as a pious Jew.