



Shabbat Acharei Mot-Kdoshim
9 Iyar 5777/May 5, 2017

Dear Shir Tikvah:

Acharei Mot-K'doshim, this week's double Torah portion, is at the physical center of the Torah. Indeed, for those given the honor of Hagbah-lifting the Torah after the reading-it is perfectly balanced on both sides.

The content at the center of Torah is a cry to the Jewish people to create a moral society of holiness, justice, and human dignity. Here are a few verses that weave together these inseparable pursuits:

9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest.

10 You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am Adonai your God.

11 You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another.

12 You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Eternal

13 You shall not defraud your fellow. You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning.

14 You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God: I am the Eternal [Lev.19:9-14]

The central portion of Torah commands us to feed the hungry, pay fair wages, not swear falsely in God's name, insult the deaf, or defraud one another.

For the Jewish people, there is little distinction between our pursuit of justice and our pursuit of holiness-we are commanded to do both, simultaneously.

Torah-the world-is balanced when we seek to be closer to the Divine, to care for one another, and to build a fair society. This is what it means to be a holy people: to raise a Torah of holiness and justice and human dignity.

Shabbat Shalom,
Michael