

“פן תקדש המלאה”¹ – The Significance of the Prohibition of *Kilaim* –

Forbidden Mixtures

- What forbidden mixtures feature in our parasha?
- What does the warning “פן תקדש המלאה” mean?
- What is the reason behind these prohibitions?

1. Forbidden Mixtures in the Parasha

Parshat Ki-Tetzei is part of the “Mitzvot Speech” in the book of Devarim, and it is abounding with mitzvot (27 positive mitzvot and 47 negative mitzvot). In this lesson, we will discuss a certain group of mitzvot that feature in this parasha – *Kilaim*, forbidden mixtures:

לא תזרע כרמך כלאים פן תקדש המלאה הזרע אשר תזרע ותבואת הכרם: לא תחריש בשור ובחמור יחדו: לא תלבש שעטנז צמר ופשתים יחדו.

Do not plant two kinds of seed in your vineyard; lest all of the seed you plant and also the fruit of the vineyard will be defiled. Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together. Do not wear clothes of wool and linen woven together. (Devarim 22:9-11).

Kilaim = Forbidden Mixture

The word *kilaim* means “mixture,” as Onkelos translates: “You shall not plant a mixture (עירובין) in your vineyard,” and similarly, the Radak in *Sefer HaShorashim* also explains: “*Kilaim* means: mixed...”²

¹ Translator’s note: The phrase “פן תקדש המלאה” is unclear, even to Hebrew readers and scholars – indeed, much of this lesson discusses the actual meaning of the phrase. Different English versions of the Bible translate this phrase differently, and most translations change the word order, so that the original three word long phrase is split up in the translation, such as in the New International Translation, above, or the Koren translation: “Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: **lest** the fruit of the seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of the vineyard, **be forfeited**.” The translation of the phrase will therefore change over the course of the lesson, and different suggestions will be raised according to the discussion.

Kilaim of the vineyard

Verse 9 mentions the prohibition of planting other seeds in a vineyard. From the second half of the verse, “פן תקדש המלאה הזרע אשר תזרע,” “lest all of the seed you plant become defiled,” Chazal derived that it is halachically forbidden to plant two kinds of crops (or vegetables) together with grapeseed, as Rashi phrases it:

“כלאים” – חטה ושעורה וחרצן במפולת יד.

“Kilaim” – wheat and barley and grapesseed hand-sown [together].

Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together

Verse 10 prohibits plowing with an ox and a donkey harnessed together (from which Halacha derives that it is forbidden to plow with any two different animals yoked together). Ramban (ad loc.) explains that this is a prohibition related to the prohibition of mating two different species of animals in Vayikra 19:19:

ואמר "לא תחרש בשור ובחמור" – והוא הדין לכל מיני הכלאים. והיא מצוה מבוארת מן "בהמתך לא תרביע כלאים" (ויקרא י"ט, יט), שדרך כל עובד אדמתו להביא צמדו ברפת אחת וירכיב אותן.

And it says, “Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together” – this is the law for all kinds of forbidden mixtures. And this is a mitzvah derived from “you shall not mate different kinds of animals” (Vayikra 19:19), as it is the custom of every land worker to bring a pair in one enclosure and mate them.

That is, the Torah forbade the plowing of an ox and a donkey together in order to prevent a person from transgressing the prohibition of mating different species.

² The Yerushalmi Talmud also translates thus (ibid.):

“זית קנמי תטרון בעירך לא תרביעניו עירובין חקלך לא תזרע עירובין לבוש עירובין פלאי עמר וכיתן לא יסוק עלך.”

Similarly, Rashi (ibid. 11) explains that the word Sha’atnez means “mixed.” At this lesson’s end, we will present another meaning of the word *Kilaim*, related to the word כלא, “prison.”

In contrast, the Ibn Ezra saw this prohibition in relation to the first half of the verse, which mentions vineyard *kilaim*:

“לא תחרוש בשור ובחמור” – דבק עם הזריעה. והשם חמל על כל מעשיו, כי אין כח החמור ככח השור.

“Do not plow with an ox and donkey yoked together” – this is juxtaposed with the sowing. And God had mercy on all his creations, for the strength of the donkey is not like the strength of the ox.

In the Ibn-Ezra’s opinion, the reason for this prohibition is derived from fear of cruelty to animals,³ and is not ideologically similar to the prohibition of *Kilaim* of the vineyard – that is, the two parts of the verse deal with two different prohibitions with two different reasons. Thus, the only connection between them is structural rather than conceptual – both are agricultural prohibitions relating to the combinations of two different species. The first part of the verse mentioned sowing, so the second part discusses a prohibition related to the preparation of the field for sowing – plowing.

Sha’atnez

³ *Sefer HaHinuch* (mitzvah 550) explains the *Ba’al Turim* (ibid.) as having a similar conceptual direction:

“אל תחרש על רעך רעה.” זהו שמפרש טעם שלא לחרוש בשור ובחמור, לפי שהשור מעלה גרה והחמור אינו מעלה גרה, וכשיראה השור מעלה גרה יהיה סבור שהוא אוכל ומצטער, וזהו אל תחרש על רעך רעה, שגורם לחמור שחורש על רעהו רעה.

“Do not plot (**תחרש**) evil against your neighbor.” This is an explanation of the reason not to plow with an ox and donkey together, because the ox chews the cud while the donkey does not, and when [the donkey] sees the ox chewing the cud he will be convinced that he is eating and be sorry [that he is eating rather than working], and this is the meaning of “do not plot evil against your neighbor,” which causes the donkey to resent his “neighbor.”

In his opinion, the donkey’s difficulty is not in bearing the yoke and the plowing itself, but its “envy” of the ox, who chews the cud and thus seems to be eating. In this reading, the word “תחרוש” has two meanings: “to plow” and “to plot,” an expression of the donkey’s resentment towards his “neighbor,” the ox.

Verse 11 forbids *kilaim* in clothing – Sha’atnez, the prohibition of wearing a garment made of both wool and linen. According to Rashi, the simple meaning of the word Sha’atnez is derived from the word “mixture.” However, Chazal (whose words are brought by Rashi ad loc.) explain that the word is an abbreviation of the words "שוע, טווי, ונוז", that is: combing, spinning and weaving together.⁴

If so, then the three prohibited mixtures mentioned in our parasha: *Kilaim* of the vineyard, the yoking and plowing of two different animals, and *Kilaim* of the garment – are parallel⁵ to the three such prohibitions in parashat Kedoshim, though the order is slightly different:

⁴ This is Rashi’s interpretation, but Rabbeinu Tam interprets the word “נוז” in the sense of “שזור,” arranged together, and therefore in his opinion the Torah prohibits wool and linen together even if they are not actually woven, but combined after each was woven separately. In the words of the *Torah Temima* (on Devarim 22, comment 110):

דרשו מלת שעטנו בדרך נוטריקון, ורבו הפירושים והדעות בענין זה. לרש"י בסוגיא כאן אינו אסור משום כלאים עד שיהא הצמר והפשתים מעורב וסרוק וטוי ואריג הכל ביחד, משום דכתיב יחדיו, ונוז היינו ארוג [ובפירושו בפ' קדושים פירש נז – שזור]. ולר"ת בסוגיא הוי שעטנו אפילו סרק וטוה ושור ב' חוטין ממין אחד כל אחד לבדו ואח"כ חברם יחד ע"י אריגה או קשירה או תפירה, ונוז היינו שזור... ומה שהכריח לחז"ל בכלל לדרוש המלה שעטנו בדרך נוטריקון כמבואר, נראה משום דע"פ רוב הוי שורש כל מלה מלה"ק לא יותר מג' אותיות, ואשר היא יותרת דרשה חז"ל...

The word Sha’atnez is interpreted as an abbreviation, and most hold by this opinion. Here, Rashi holds that there is no prohibition of *Kilaim* unless the wool and linen are blended and combed out and spun and woven together, because it is written “together,” and “נוז” means woven. Rabbeinu Tam holds that Sha’atnez is even when wool and linen are combed out and spun and woven separately and then joined together through weaving or tying or sewing, and “נוז” means “arranged.” And what compelled Chazal to interpret the word Sha’atnez as an abbreviation in the first place seems to come from the majority opinion that word roots in the Holy tongue consist of no more than three letters, and as it is more, Chazal sought to interpret it...

⁵ And as we saw, in the Ramban’s opinion there is full congruence, while in the Ibn Ezra’s opinion the prohibition to plow with two different animals is only related technically, as a forbidden mixture, but the reasoning behind this prohibition is different.

אֶת חֻקֹּתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ בְּהִמָּתְךָ לֹא תִרְבִּיעַ כְּלָאִים, שָׂדֶךְ לֹא תִזְרַע כְּלָאִים, וּבְגָד כְּלָאִים שֶׁעֲטָנֹה לֹא יַעֲלֶה עָלֶיךָ.
Observe my statutes, you shall not mate two different animals, in your field you shall not plant forbidden mixtures, and a garment of forbidden mixture shall not be worn by you. (Vayikra 19:19).

2. Explaining the Warning: “פֶּן תִּקְדַּשׁ הַמְּלֵאָה”

Sefer HaChinuch numbers four prohibitions related to *Kilaim* in our parasha: three that we have listed above, wherein *Kilaim* of the vineyard is considered to be two separate prohibitions – the prohibition of sowing and the prohibition of deriving benefit (הנאה) from the result.

The Talmud⁶ derives the latter prohibition from the phrase in verse 9: "פֶּן תִּקְדַּשׁ הַמְּלֵאָה הַזֶּרַע אֲשֶׁר". Chazal interpreted the word “תִּקְדַּשׁ” as an abbreviation of the words “תִּזְרַע וְתִבְּרָא וְתִכָּרֵם”.⁷ That is: if *Kilaim* were planted in a vineyard they must be completely destroyed,⁷ without deriving any pleasure from them (ie. they cannot be sold for profit). It is clear that Chazal’s interpretation is an exegetic explanation, and this prohibition can also be derived from the plain meaning of the text. If so, then what is the literal translation of this phrase?

תִּקְדַּשׁ - forbid

The meaning of the word “מְלֵאָה” is the “full grain,” that is: ripe grain, as the word appears in two other places in the Bible,⁸ and this is also the interpretation of the Radak.⁹ The meaning of

⁶ See *Kiddushin* 56b.

⁷ However, in contrast to Chametz on Pesach, which cannot be left because of “בִּל יֵרָאֶה וּבִל יִמָּצֵא” (should not be seen or found) and must therefore be destroyed immediately, in this case the forbidden produce does not require immediate destruction, and in practice, such produce needs not be burnt, but can be left to rot by itself.

⁸ a. “Do not hold back offerings from your **granaries** or your vats” (Shemot 22:28) – when the crops become ripe, the offering of the first fruits, *Bikkurim*, must be brought.

b. “Like grain from the threshing-floor and as the **fullness** from the wine-press” (Bamidbar 18:26) – here the “מְלֵאָה” refers to the ripe grapes or the wine produced from them.

the word “תקדש” is “forbid.”¹⁰ Therefore, the expression “תקדש המלאה” is the source of the prohibition to derive benefit from the *Kilaim*.

The prohibition and the sacred

Why does the Torah use the word “תקדש” to describe this prohibition? What is the connection between what is **forbidden** and what is **קדוש, sacred**?

Many commentators explain that the common denominator between the forbidden and the sacred is that a person is required to distance himself from both.¹¹ Yet the question still stands: is it because of this common denominator that the word “קדוש” can be used to institute a prohibition?

קדשה – Kdesha – an expression of prostitution

In order to answer this question, we will first look at another verse in our parasha that uses the root קדש in a similar sense:

לֹא תִהְיֶה קְדֻשָּׁה מִבְּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יִהְיֶה קֹדֶשׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

No daughter of Israel shall be a ritual prostitute, nor shall any son of Israel be a ritual prostitute.

(23:18)

⁹ These are his words (Radak, *Sefer HaShorashim*, root מלא): “המלאה הזרע” ... that is: the fullness of the seed is the produce of the seed when it ripens.”

¹⁰ Rashi, ad loc., explains thus:

“פן תקדש” – כתרוממו תסתאב. כל דבר הנתעב על האדם בין לשבח כגון הקדש בין לגנאי כגון איסור, נופל בו לשון קדש כמו אל תגע בי כי קדשתך.

“lest it be defiled” – like the translation תסתאב, be defiled. Everything that a person distances himself from, whether in a positive sense, like the holy, or in a negative sense, such as a prohibition, is referred to as קדש, as in, do not touch Me, for I have made you holy (קדשתך).

¹¹ Thus, for example, the Radak writes (*Sefer HaShorashim*, קדש), Rashbam (here) and Ramban (here).

In this verse as well, the use of the root **קדש** is surprising, for a *kdesha* is a prostitute¹² - doesn't the Torah describe prostitution and forbidden relations as the antithesis of *kedusha*, of holiness?¹³

Commentators have attempted to find other possible interpretations for the words **קדש** and **קדשה**. In the opinion of Rashi,¹⁴ Ibn Ezra, and Radak,¹⁵ the root **קדש** signifies destiny, designation. The male and female prostitute designate themselves for prostitution and they are therefore referred to thus. However, despite the logic of this explanation, which is supported by other appearances of this word in other verses, the question still stands: why did the Torah choose to describe prostitution as a person's destiny, as intentional designation rather than a perversion, as the Torah usually conveys with the word "זונה"?¹⁶

Kdesha – ritual prostitution

It seems that the Torah chose the word *Kdesha* to describe a particular kind of prostitution related, in a sense, to *kedusha*: a kind of prostitution that was an integral part of the ritual worship of idolatry, a ritual considered holy to **idol worshippers**.¹⁷ This explanation is also

¹² As explained in the story of Yehuda and Tamar (Bereshit 38; and see verse 20 in comparison with verse 15).

¹³ See Vayikra 18 and 20, as well as chapter 21:7.

¹⁴ Devarim 23:18. However, he explains differently in regard to the phrasing of the *Kilaim* passage, as brought in comment 8.

¹⁵ The Ibn Ezra ad loc., and the Radak in the *Sefer HaShorashim*, at the end of the entry "קדש."

¹⁶ This word features in several places in the Bible, including the next verse: "You shall not bring a prostitute's earnings or the money from a sold dog to the House of the Lord your God," so that it cannot be said that the Torah avoids the use of this word.

¹⁷ Perhaps in this way the story of the "Ba'al Peor" can be understood (Bamidbar 25: 1-9). Similarly, it can be concluded from several verse in the book of Kings that ritual prostitution was an integral part of some forms of idolatry; as in 1 Kings 14:23-24:

somewhat problematic – isn't the concept of holiness something objective rather than something measured by fallible humans?

Kdesha – the opposite of *Kedusha*

It seems, therefore, that the Torah refers to prostitution using an antithetical euphemism, the word *kdesha* hinting at the opposite of *kedusha*.

Let us look at the Ramban's interpretation, which disagrees with that of Rashi and the Ibn Ezra, and connects the word *kdesha* to *kedusha*:

...ולפי דעתי כולם מלשון קדושה, כי הפורש מן הזנות נקרא קדוש כמו שנאמר (ויקרא כ"א, ז): "אשה זונה וחללה לא יקחו ואשה גרושה מאישה לא יקחו כי קדוש הוא לא-להיו".

They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every shady tree. There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites.

and in 15: 11-12:

Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done. He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his ancestors had made.

And similarly in Hoshea 4:13-14:

They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar and terebinth, where the shade is pleasant. Therefore your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery. "I will not punish your daughters when they turn to prostitution, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery, because the men themselves consort with harlots and sacrifice with shrine prostitutes— a people without understanding will come to ruin!

And see Meir Gruber's article (Hebrew):

'הקדש בספר מלכים ובמקורות אחרים' תרביץ נב 176-167.

והנה הנשמרת מן הערוה והזמה, קדושה. והנפרדת מן הקדושה ונטמאת בזמה, נקראה קדשה, קרוב למה שנוהג הלשון לומר: "ובכל תבואתי תשרש" (איוב ל"א, יב), "ודשנו את המזבח" (במדבר ד', יג), כי הזונה המפורסמת טמאת השם רבת המהומה, נפרדת מכל קדושה, ואין שם זה בה רק בהיותה מזומנת לתועבה הזאת שאין לה שעת הכושר וקדושה כלל...

In my opinion they are all used in the sense of holiness, for he who abstains from prostitution is called *kadosh*, as it says (Vayikra 11:7): "A prostitute or one born of a kohen's marriage with a divorcee [kohanim] shall not take [for a wife], nor a woman divorced from her husband shall they take, for he is holy to his God." And refraining from forbidden relations and from lechery, is *kedusha*. And one who separates himself from *kedusha* and is defiled with lechery, is called a *kdesha*, similarly to the [antithetical use of a verb root as in the phrase "ובכל תבואתי תשרש" – "it would have uprooted my harvest" (Job 31:12), "ודשנו את המזבח" – they are to remove the ashes from the altar" (Bamidbar 4:13), for the (Ramban on Devarim 23:18)¹⁸ for the prostitute is notorious for the unholy chaos she causes, far removed from anything holy, and this name [*kdesha*] only comes as an expression of separation, for she has no connection to holiness at all...

The Ramban claims that the Hebrew language sometimes uses the same root for a concept and its antithesis, and brings several examples:

1. **לשרש** means to take root, when a plant begins to grow, while **לשרש** means to uproot, to pull a plant's roots out of the ground.
2. **דָּשַׁן** means thriving, good,¹⁹ while **דָּשַׁן** has the opposite meaning – the ashes removed from the altar.²⁰

¹⁸ The Ramban claims that all words from the root **קדש** are related to **קדושה**, holiness. He goes on to explain how to interpret the other words brought by the commentators in this sense as a proof for his argument that the word "קדש" means "invitation."

¹⁹ Such as: "דשנים ורעננים יהיו" – "when they eat their fill and **thrive**" (Devarim 31:20), "ואכל ושבע ודשן" – "they will stay vigorous and fresh" (Psalms 92).

²⁰ Such as: "ודשנו את המזבח" – "and they will remove the ashes from the altar." (Bamidbar 4:13).

Ramban is thus making a fundamental argument: if the Torah uses the same root, it is a sign that there *is* a connection between the words. In his opinion, **it is the use of the same root that emphasizes the antithetical nature of the two concepts.**

Kedusha as destiny

As the commentators of the *peshat*, the simple meaning of the text, were inclined to explain the word *kdesha* as an expression of “designation,” let us attempt to follow this meaning while keeping the Ramban’s principle of opposite meanings in the same root in mind. We will explore the connection between the words *kdesha* and *kedusha*, relating to the meaning of the word *kidush* as “designation, purpose.”

A person referred to as *kadosh* is a person with a **higher purpose**, and therefore both a priest and a *nazir*, a person who abstains from certain practices, are called “kadosh.”²¹ What is *kadosh* is different, separated and special from the ordinary, as it is designated for higher purposes. The Torah also refers to all of Israel as *kadosh* in the sense that they are distinguished from the other nations for a higher purpose:

וַעֲתָה אִם שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת בְּרִיתִי וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סֹגְלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים כִּי לִי כָל הָאָרֶץ: וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מְמֻלָּכֶת כְּהֹנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ...
...קדוש

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a **holy** nation.’ (Shemot 19: 5-6)

Kedusha as abstinence and separation

The Torah commands Israel “You shall be holy” (Vayikra 19:1). What does this mean?

²¹ See Vayikra 22:7; Shemot 28:3, 21; Bamidbar, 6:8.

Rashi explains that *kedusha* is abstinence from forbidden relations, and the Ramban extends the term *kedusha* to abstinence from luxury or excess. That is, *kedusha* is abstinence from desire, and separation. The holy person distances his or herself from desires, and designates him or herself for a spiritual purpose.

The opposite of designation for holiness is designating one's self for the profane. Thus, the prostitute is referred to as *kadesh* or *kdesha* as an expression of his or her separation from normal human behavior and self-designation for prostitution.

פן תקדש המלאה

In our parasha as well, when the Torah wants us to abstain from *kilaim*, the language used is “פן תקדש המלאה,” – that is: the fruits need to be set aside and it is forbidden to derive benefit from them.²²

This brings us to the question of why, out of all the prohibitions in the Torah, the root קדש is used in relation to *these* two mitzvot: *kilaim* and prostitution?²³

Prostitution is the opposite of *kedusha*

The Torah often emphasizes that prostitution is the opposite of *kedusha*, and therefore, as the Ramban argues, the Torah refers to this using the root קדש, which emphasizes this antithesis.

However, why are *Kilaim* referred to with this same root?

²² It may be that this was Rashi's intention in his interpretation of “פן תקדש המלאה” (see note 10).

²³ It is interesting to note that the prohibition of forbidden mixtures appears for the first time in Parashat Kedoshim, which describes sanctity, abstinence from forbidden relations, and the mitzvot which are unique to Am Yisrael which designate them for a holy life.

Kadesh and Kdesha – an expression of mixing

It may be that in light of this, the Ibn Ezra chose to interpret the root קדש in our parasha differently:

"פן תקדש". כבר פירשו מנחם בן סרוק הספרדי במחברתו והוא מגזרת קדש, בעבור שיתערב זה עם זה.

“פן תקדש”. The Sefardic Menahem ben Saruq already explained that this is derived from קדש because it became mixed up. (Ibn Ezra, Devarim 22:9)

The Ibn Ezra explains that the root קדש is an expression of mixture. Prostitution is a mixture in the sense that family life is contaminated, mixed with the outside, while *kilaim* is a mixture of two species (ox and donkey, wool and linen, grain and vine), and it is therefore clear why the Torah uses this language in this particular context.

The “*Yahel Or*”²⁴ commentary on the Ibn Ezra adds that the problem with such “mixtures” is that they served as part of the ritual of idolatry.²⁵

To summarize, so far: the Torah uses an unusual expression (“פן תקדש”) in regard to *kilaim* in order to forbid the deriving of benefit from the product of *kilaim*. Likewise, the Torah uses similar language in regard to the prohibition of prostitution (“לא תהיה קדשה”). Exploring the root קדש, we saw different explanations which illuminate the connection between the prohibition of

²⁴ “*Yahel Or*” is a commentary on the Ibn Ezra’s commentary on the Torah by Yehuda Leib Krinsky, who lived in Minsk at the end of the nineteenth century. The commentary appears in the Chumash *Mechokkei Yehuda*, which includes two commentaries: “*Yahel Or*,” which solves riddles and puzzles in the Ibn Ezra, and “*Karnei Or*” which identifies the sources in Chazal that the Ibn Ezra used.

²⁵ He explains thus: “to mix this and that” – for idol worshipers would use these mixtures, planting mixed seeds, as well as abominable relations, which was also an unnatural mixture...

And see the words of the Rambam in *Moreh Nevachim*, part 3, chapters 35 and 37.

kilaim and the prohibition of prostitution (separation and abstinence, designation, euphemistic language and mixture). We will now discuss the reasoning behind the prohibition of *kilaim*, and through this reasoning, we will explore if there is a deeper common denominator between the two mitzvot where the Torah applies the same unusual use of a root.

3. Reasons for the Prohibition of *Kilaim*

Why did the Torah forbid *kilaim*?

A statute without a clear reason

In Rashi's opinion (Vayikra 19:19), the prohibition of *kilaim* is a statute, with no given reason, intended to separate and refine Am Yisrael, and we must therefore observe these commands without understanding them, purely out of obedience to the King.

Ramban is ideologically opposed to Rashi's approach to such statutes, claiming throughout his commentary that mitzvot have reasons and they are not merely decrees to be carried out.²⁶ In the same vein, many commentators disagreed with Rashi – at least in regard to the mitzvah of *kilaim* - and tried to explain the reasoning behind this prohibition.

Kilaim creates a problem in *Bikkurim* and tithes

²⁶ And these are his words on Vayikra 19:19:

אין הכוונה בהם שתהיה גזרת מלך מלכי המלכים בשום מקום בלא טעם, כי כל אמרת א-ליוה צרופה (משלי ל', ה). רק החקים הם גזירת המלך אשר יחוק במלכותו בלי שיגלה תועלתם לעם, ואין העם נהנים בהם אבל מהרהרין אחריהם בלבם ומקבלים אותם ליראת המלכות, וכן חוקי הקב"ה הם הסודות אשר לו בתורה שאין העם במחשבתם נהנים בהם כמשפטים, אבל כולם בטעם נכון ותועלת שלימה.

It is not intended that there should be the King's decree in any place without reason, for "every word of God is flawless" (Proverbs 30:5). Only statutes are royal decrees which are decreed without their benefit being revealed to the people, and the people do not enjoy their fulfillment, but rather contemplate them in their hearts and perform them out of fear of the kingdom, and so too are God's statutes secrets which the people do not enjoy like the laws, but all have a proper reason and provide proper benefit.

Menahem ben Saruq is convinced that this prohibition was instituted to prevent problems with the fruits designated for holiness. At the basis of his explanation stands the assumption that a crop which has not yet been tithed is still sacred (at least to some degree) and one must take care to cause any loss. In *kilaim* of the vineyard, the produce planted in the vineyard does not ripen at the same time as the grapes, and the grapes may be damaged when the other crop is harvested; but if the harvest is postponed until the grapes ripen, the crops will spoil.²⁷ It seems that Menahem ben Saruq makes no distinction between mitzvot categorized as statutes, such as *kilaim* (“you shall observe My statutes, you shall not mate different kinds of animals”) and other kinds of mitzvot.

Keeping the laws of creation

However, many commentators who understood that there is a logical explanation for the prohibition of *kilaim* preferred not to overlook its particular status as a “statute,” as mentioned in the text. The Rashbam²⁸ explains the term “statute” as a mitzvah that is designed to retain the order of Creation:

²⁷ Note that Menahem ben Saruq’s words are not completely congruent with the accepted halacha: failure to bring Bikkurim does not cause one’s crop to be considered *tevel*, that is, if a person did not set Bikkurim aside, the rest of his fruits are not forbidden (See Mishnat *Bikkurim* 3:3).

²⁸ In the Rashbam’s time (the twelfth century) disputes arose between the Jews and the Christians, particularly in regard to Bible interpretation, as the Christians claimed that the mitzvot should not be interpreted literally, but rather allegorically. At the same time, the tendency to rationalism became stronger, and with it, the explanation of mitzvot through human logic. The study according to this rationalistic-simplistic reading led, on the one hand, to the simple understanding that the mitzvot are in fact practical, rather than allegorical, but on the other hand, such rationalistic study required a logical explanation for the mitzvot. This approach proved problematic in regard to mitzvot that are not “logical,” those “חוקים,” statutes, whose reason is unclear: there was concern that the Christian allegorical explanation would be accepted for this kind of mitzvot. The Jewish commentator, therefore, felt compelled to provide logical explanations that were a logical match for the Christian allegorical readings, explanations that would

...כשם שציוה הכתוב שכל אחד ואחד **יוציא פרי למינהו** במעשה בראשית, כך ציוה להנהיג את העולם בבהמות

ובשדות ואילנות וגם בחרישת שור וחמור שהם שני מינים. וגם בצמר ופשתים שזה מן בהמות וזה מן קרקע וגידוליו.

Just as it is written that each and every species bear fruit during the act of Creation, so too did He command to rule the world thus, in regard to animals, fields, trees, and also plowing with an ox and a donkey, which are two different species. And also in regard to wool and linen, the former being from an animal and the latter being from the ground and its crops²⁹

That is, statutes are fundamental laws whose purpose is to retain world order. The Rashbam perceives the laws of *kilaim* as a direct continuation of what the earth was commanded during the six days of Creation: “Let the earth produce... each according to its kind” (Bereshit 1:24), and “let the earth produce grass...fruit trees producing fruit, according to its kind” (1:11). The human is commanded not to change the order of Creation.

This explanation is expanded upon in the Ramban and the words of R. Yosef Bekhor Shor (ibid.), and R. Yosef Bekhor Shor writes thus:

support the practical observance of these mitzvot. In his explanation, therefore, the Rashbam attempts to interpret “according to ‘דרך ארץ,’ that is, courtesy and practical logic, and ‘to answer the heretics’”: “according to דרך ארץ addresses the rationalistic spirit of the times, whereas “to answer the heretics” was an attempt to challenge the Christian allegorical approach, which negates the practical fulfillment of the mitzvot.

See a wider discussion of this issue in the tenth chapter of Elazar Twito’s book “הפשטות המתחדשים בכל יום” (Hebrew).

²⁹ Similarly to the Rashbam, the Ibn Ezra writes (Vayikra, ibid.):

להזהיר אחר היותך קדוש, שלא תעשה חמס לבן אדם כמוך, גם לא תעשה לבהמה לשנות מעשה השם, על כן כתוב “את חקתי תשמרו” לשמור כל מין שלא יתערב מין עם מין.

To warn of your holy state, that you will not do violence to another fellow person, and likewise you must not cause an animal to go against an act of God, and it is therefore written “you shall observe My **statutes**” to ensure that no species will mix with another species.

“את חוקותי תשמרו” – חוקים שחקקתי לך כבר מששת ימי בראשית, אני רוצה שתשנה אותם, לעשות בריות בעולם שלא עשיתי אני.

“בהמתך לא תרביע כל־איים” – שתרכיב סוס על חמור... ויצא מהם פרד שלא בראתי, והנה שינית מעשה בראשית... **שתעשה עצמך כמו בורא. ואין הברכה מצויה בהם, ולא יוליד לעולם הפרדה ולא שום כל־איים...** וכן הרכבת האילן שגם זה מעביר החק, שגורם לתפוח שמוציא חבושים או עוזרדים ובורא בריאה שאינו חק בעולם הרי הוא משנה מנהג העולם ואסור.

“Observe My statutes” – Statutes that I already instituted in the six days of Creation, I do not wish for you to change them, to create new creations in the world that I did not make. “You shall not mate two different kinds of animal” – if you mate a horse with a donkey...and they produce a mule, which I did not create, behold, the order of Creation has been changed... you make yourselves like creators. And no blessing will come from this, and no such forbidden mixtures should ever be produced...and so too grafting trees also transgresses this statute, causing the apple tree to produce quinces or crab apples and creating a creation which was not instituted in the world, changing the world order – it is forbidden.

A product of *kilaim* cannot reproduce

The Ramban and R. Yosef Bekhor Shor explain that such interference with the acts of Creation is problematic in relation to human pride, the mortal likening himself to the Immortal, to play the role of God. But beyond this reason, both commentators continue, explaining that such human creations – *kilaim* – is not similar to Divine creation in the blessing it contains. God’s blessing of “be fruitful and multiply” is not extended to products of human imitation.

Species created by *kilaim*, by the human hand, have no real existence, and therefore any such interference with the order of Creation only ruins and weakens the world. A mule, a human creation, born of a horse and a donkey, may have certain unique qualities, but it cannot reproduce, and it is thus inherently flawed.³⁰

³⁰ The prohibition of *Kilaim* in regard to flora and fauna can be understood thus, but it is difficult to understand the prohibition of Sha’atnez thus, because it does not cause any inter-species mixing. Indeed, the Rashbam and R. Yosef Bekhor Shor explain the Sha’atnez prohibition differently. It seems that the Rashbam is convinced that the reason behind this prohibition is its lack of aesthetics. His words on the matter are brief and obscure:

Interference in higher worlds

The Ramban (ad loc.) takes this discussion further by explaining this reason in kabbalistic terms. Every single plant has a governing ministering force that “beats it and orders it to grow” (see *Bereshit Raba* 10:6). That same supreme power which affects the creations down below is affected in return. Creating *kilaim* in the world below affects the world above, and interferes with these supreme governing powers.³¹ According to this explanation, the verse “you shall observe

ולמינים אמרתי: הצמר צבוע והפשתן איננו צבוע וקפיד בבגד של שני מראות, והודו לי.

And to the heretics I said: wool is dyed and linen is not dyed, and the two appearances is not fitting for a garment, and they conceded to me.

It seems that the matter at hand is lack of aesthetics. He expresses how the “heretics” accepted his word, and that seems to have been the main point.

In the opinion of R. Yosef Bekhor Shor, Sha’atnez is forbidden because the clothing of the High Priest combined wool and linen (the turquoise, purple and scarlet were colors used for dyeing wool, and the “שש” was linen), and it was forbidden to use things that were done especially for the Mishkan.

³¹ He writes thus:

... שלא לערבב הכחות המגדלים הצמחים להיות יונקים זה מזה, ממה שאמרו בבראשית רבה (פרשה י', ו): “אמר רבי סימון אין לך כל עשב ועשב מלמטה שאין לו מזל ברקיע ומכה אותו ואומר לו גדל...” והנה המרכיב כלאים או זורען בכדי שינקו זה מזה מבטל חקות שמים, ולכך אמר בהם את חקותי תשמורו, כי הם חקות שמים, וכך אמר רבי חנינא משום רבי פנחס (ירושלמי כלאים פ”א ה”ז) – משום חקים שחקקתי בהם את עולמי.

וכבר כתבתי בסדר בראשית (א', יא) שהצמחים כולם יסודותם בעליונים ומשם צוה להם השם את הברכה חיים עד העולם, והנה המערב כלאים מכחיש ומערב מעשה בראשית.

...not to combine the potency of plants to draw from each other, based on what was said in *Bereshit Raba* (10:6):

“Rabbi Simon said, There is no single plant that grows below that does not have a star in the heaven that beats it and orders it to grow...” One who grows *Kilaim* or plants them so that their powers will combine is cancelling out the laws of heaven, and it thus says “you must observe My statutes,” for these are statutes of heaven, and therefore, Rabbi Hanina said on Rabbi Pinchas’s behalf (*Yerushalmi Kilaim* 1:7) – because of the statutes through which I instated My world.

And I have already written in regard to the order of Creation (1:11) that all plants are all based in the heavens, and from there God commanded their eternal blessing, so that one who mixes forbidden mixtures is denying and mixing up the act of Creation.

My statutes,” which introduces the mitzvot of *kilaim* in Vayikra 19, takes on another meaning: these laws are not meaningless statutes, not even just laws that retain the order of Creation, but they dictate that a **person has responsibility to observe “the laws of heaven” and retain order in the worlds above.**³²

Rabeinu Bahya (ibid.) expounds upon the words of the Ramban, explaining that proper interaction between species endows them with blessings of peace, and these blessings rebound and affects the supreme powers which govern those species. The same is true of the opposite – when there is negative interaction between species, order and peace in the upper regions and their government is disrupted.³³ He interprets the word *kilaim* in the sense of כלא, “prison, confinement”: the governing powers are blocked and confined.³⁴ He also explains the prohibition of Sha’atnez similarly. Every inter-species combination, even one that is not designed to generate produce, has the power to influence and create new things.³⁵³⁶

³² See also in the Recanati (Vayikra 19:19).

³³ Rabeinu Bahya writes thus:

...וכל הכחות העליונים השכליים כל אחד ואחד ממונה על פקודתו ועל ממשלתו, והפעולות בעולם השפל הזה משתלשות בסיבתם, ובזה העולם מתקיים ועומד על השלמות... ואם כן, המעמיד תולדות למטה מין במינו גורם השלום למעלה... והמעמיד תולדות למטה מין בשאינו מינו הרי זה גורם הפך השלום כי הוא מערבב הכחות העליונים ומבטל אותן ועוקר אותן ממנויים.

...and all the supreme powers are each assigned to a specific unit or state, and the actions in the lower world occur as a result of their governing, and through this the world exists and is whole and complete...and if so, one who produces within a species maintains harmony in the upper realm...and one who produces by mixing species upsets this harmony, for he is mixing supreme powers, negating them and uprooting them from their position.

³⁴ See more in the Maharal (*Gur Arie*h, Vayikra 19:19).

³⁵ The Ramban (in the next part of his commentary, ibid.) says that “the reason for the forbidden mixtures in garments is in order to prevent mixing species.” That is, Sha’atnez is a restriction that the Torah instituted in order to ensure that a person becomes accustomed to separating between different species, in order to prevent proper mixing,

Prostitution and *kilaim* ruin the reproductive order

Now let us return to the previous question – why does the Torah refer to both *kilaim* and prostitution using the root שָׁדַח? Both prohibitions are inherently related to the order of reproduction and generation – of plants, animals, and humans. The objective of these two mitzvot is to retain world order and prevent destructive mixing, to ensure proper existence in the world. This must be done without disrupting the world order as God created it, without interfering with supreme powers, but with a sense of cooperation with God, with a sense of holiness.

Disrupting the course of normal reproduction affects both the world below and the worlds above, while retaining proper order retains harmony within and between heaven and earth.

Creation out of partnership

such as in *Kilaim* of the vineyard or mating different animals together (and as we saw, the prohibition to plow an ox and donkey together serves a similar purpose – to prevent a person's raising of these animals in the same enclosure). However, Rabeinu Bahya attempts to explain the prohibition of Sha'atnez in kabbalistic terms as an actual mixture, rather than as merely a preventative restriction. He explains that wool and linen are two polar elements whose combination results in impurity. The root of this incompatibility can already be traced in the story of Kayin and Hevel:

...ומה שנאסר לנו בבגדים, והוא הצמר והפשתים, לפי שהנולדים ראשונה (קין והבל) קרבנם היה צמר ופשתים... ולכך נאסר לנו חיבור הצמר והפשתים יחדיו לפי שחיבור שניהם בכרם אחד לא עלה יפה... כי בלבשו בגד כלאים שעטנו יעלה עליו רוח הטומאה...

And what has been forbidden to us in clothing, [the combination of] wool and linen, is according to those born first (Kayin and Hevel), whose offerings were wool and linen...and therefore, we have been prohibited to combine wool and linen because this combination did not turn out well...for in the donning of a garment of Sha'atnez, one will be seized by an impure spirit...

³⁶ For other reasons, see Rav Kook's words in *B'Shemen Ra'anan*, p. 330.

God commanded humankind: “be fruitful and multiply and fill the land and subdue it” (Bereshit 1:28). This commandment encompasses all human inclination to creativity and development within the world, which is a fundamental commandment, a basic purpose for the creation of humanity in the world.³⁷ However, this must be done in full partnership with God; creating *kilaim* disrupts the order of Creation as God intended it, and tries to create something new which did not previously exist, thus creating detachment from the Creator of the world. Humankind must build and develop God’s world, but not attempt to create a new world.

We must strive to develop and perfect, to advance and cultivate, but not out of detachment, of alienation; rather, in partnership with the Creator of the world, and therein lies holiness.

³⁷ In the beautiful words of Rav Soloveitchik, in “Lonely Man of Faith”:

In other words, man is a dignified being and to be human means to live with dignity...Man of old who could not fight disease and succumbed in multitudes to yellow fever or any other plague with degrading helplessness could not lay claim to dignity. Only the man who builds hospitals, discovers therapeutic techniques and saves lives is blessed with dignity. Man of the 17th and 18th centuries who needed several days to travel from Boston to New York was less dignified than modern man who attempts to conquer space...In doing all this, Adam the first is trying to carry out the mandate entrusted to him by his Maker who, at dawn of the sixth mysterious day of creation, addressed Himself to man and summoned him to "fill the earth and subdue it."