



Shabbat Table Talk Page

Overview

- **Parashah: Kedoshim (קְדוּשִׁים, "holy ones")**
- **Chapters: Leviticus 19:1-20:27**



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה

– Torah Study Blessing –

Synopsis

Last week's Torah portion (Acharei Mot) concerned the yearly Yom Kippur ritual that purged the sins of the people and restored the Sanctuary to a state of purity (tahora). This week's Torah portion continues the theme of purity and begins with the LORD saying to the Israelites, "You must be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy." The portion then proceeds to list more commandments regarding practical ethics than any other portion of the Torah, thereby directly connecting holiness with obedience to God's moral truth.

After stating the foundational requirement to be holy, the LORD begins to explain, "Each of you must respect his mother and his father, and you must keep my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God." The duty to revere (or honor) one's parents recalls the Fifth Commandment, which is the starting point of learning to respect other people in our lives. Notice that the word for "my Sabbaths" implies *both* the keeping of the weekly Sabbath as well as the "appointed times" of the LORD. Sanctifying time is a way we can express practical holiness and turn away from idolatry.

The Israelites were to practice mercy by providing for the poor and the stranger by leaving the edges of the fields unharvested (pe'ah) and leaving any pieces that remain during the harvest for the poor to gather as food (leket). They also were to leave fallen fruits from their orchards for the needy to eat. The Ten Commandments were then restated, and the people were further instructed not to insult the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind. They were to use a "good eye" when judging others and not to bear any grudges. Indeed, the essence of holiness may be stated as "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." God further instructs the people to love the stranger in their midst "kamocha" - as they love themselves, for the Jews were strangers in the land of Egypt.

The laws of "kilayim" are then given, which are a series of prohibitions against the intermixing of certain breeds and species. The Israelites must not interbreed different species of cattle or mix different types of seed in their fields. They are also not to wear clothing made from the mixture of two kinds of fabric (shaatnez). In addition, the fruit of a newly planted tree may not be eaten until the fifth year, and any fruit yielded by the tree in these years is called "orlah" - "blocked."

Various other laws are given, including laws against occult practices, including divination, eating blood, defiling or disfiguring the body, engaging in prostitution, and the heinous practice of child sacrifice. Sexual immorality is prohibited and punishments for sexual sins are defined. The people are warned to keep all these laws or to face being "vomited out" of the Promised Land. The portion ends: "You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine."



Basic Questions

1. What is the Hebrew word for “holiness,” and what does it mean? ¹
2. What does the word “Kedoshim” mean? ²
3. God told Moses that the children of Israel must be holy. Why? ³
4. When a “peace offering” was sacrificed, by when did it have to be completely eaten? ⁴
5. When reaping the harvest of the land, we are commanded to leave what for whom? ⁵
6. When are the wages of a hired worker to be paid? ⁶
7. Is it ever permissible to show partiality to the rich in cases of personal judgment? ⁷
8. What is lashon hara? ⁸
9. What is meant by the commandment “you shall surely rebuke your neighbor and not bear sin because of him”? ⁹
10. We are to “fear” (yirah) our parents, but if a parent tells a child to commit a sin, is the child required to obey? ¹⁰
11. What principle is implied by the related commandments not to “curse a deaf person” and not to “put a stumbling block” in front of a blind person? ¹¹
12. What kind of tattoos does the Torah permit? ¹²
13. Why does the oft-repeated phrase, “I am the LORD” appear after many commandments? ¹³

¹ Kedushah (קְדוּשָׁה), from a root word that means “set apart” as sacred. Personal holiness is called “sanctification” and implies separation from sin and impurity. Believers in Yeshua have an “imputed holiness” (1 Cor 1:30).

² “Holy ones.” Those who are “called out” from the world to serve God are “kedoshim” (קְדוּשִׁים).

³ In order to be in relationship with a holy God, the people had to be holy themselves, since darkness and light cannot coexist, and God’s moral purity and truth are inviolable to His nature.

⁴ The shelamim had to be eaten by the end of the second day or it was to be destroyed (Lev. 19:5-6).

⁵ We are commanded to leave the *corner* of the field (*pe’ah*: פֶּאֶה) and the *gleanings* of the harvest (*leket*: לֶקֶט) for the poor and the stranger (Lev. 19:9). In addition, we are commanded not to pick our orchards or vineyards bare, but to leave fallen fruit for the poor (Lev. 19:10).

⁶ By the end of the day; they may not be withheld over night (Lev. 19:13).

⁷ No, we must judge *impartially* (בְּצִדִּיק), favoring neither the wealthy person due to his influence, nor the poor person because he is in need of assistance (Lev. 19:15).

⁸ “Evil speech,” which includes *rechilut* (רִכְלִיּוּת), “gossip,” “slander,” and so on. Lashon hara involves saying something bad about another person even if it happens to be true. The sages connect the commandment “not to stand idly by the blood of your neighbor” with lashon hara, because harming someone’s reputation is like taking his life.

⁹ God commands us to admonish our neighbor regarding the potential consequences of his ways. From the phrase “not bear sin” (לֹא תִשָּׂא עָלֶיךָ חַטָּאת) the sages teach that we must offer correction in a kind and loving manner (Lev. 19:17). One of the most unloving things you can do to another is to disregard their high calling to live before God.

¹⁰ No.

¹¹ That we should never be cruel to others, esp. to the disabled. Note that this implies that we are forbidden to curse someone “under our breath,” give someone bad advice, etc. *Lifnei iver lo titen mikhshol*: לִפְנֵי עֵוֶר לֹא תִתֵּן מִכְשָׁל

¹² None (Lev. 19:28).

¹³ 1. To remind you nothing is hidden from His eyes; 2. To remind you that God will help you perform this mitzvah.



14. Explain the laws about harvesting fruit trees in Israel. ¹⁴
15. What words teach us to give honor to old people? ¹⁵
16. Is a Jew allowed to treat a stranger (גֵּר) like an “outsider” who is unwelcome? ¹⁶
17. If someone intentionally curses his parents – dead or alive – what is his punishment? ¹⁷
18. If two people commit adultery, what was the punishment? ¹⁸
19. If a man “lies with a male as with a woman,” what was the punishment? ¹⁹
20. Is it always wrong to judge others? ²⁰
21. What do the words “with righteousness you shall judge your neighbor” mean? ²¹
22. If you see your friend doing something contrary to the law of God, you must rebuke him, even up to “70 times 7” times. Does this mean we can embarrass or shame someone? ²²
23. *Lo Tikkom* (לֹא-תִקָּם) means “don’t take revenge.” Give an example of a vengeful action. ²³
24. *Lo Tittor* (לֹא-תִטֹּר) means “don’t bear a grudge.” Give an example of holding a grudge. ²⁴
25. What is the “great commandment” of the Torah? ²⁵
26. It is written, “Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father” (Lev. 19:3). Why is the mother mentioned ahead of the father? ²⁶
27. Can you list the Ten Commandments? ²⁷
28. What were the consequences if the people refused to obey God’s commandments? ²⁸

¹⁴ Fruit from the tree is “orlah” (forbidden, blocked off) during the first 4 years after the tree was planted. During the 4th year, all the fruit is considered fit for God and holy. In the 5th year, the fruit can be eaten (Lev. 19:23-25).

¹⁵ Mipnei Sevah Takum (מִפְּנֵי שִׁבְהָ תִקּוּם): “You must stand up in the presence of the aged” and honor the face of the old man (Lev. 19:32). This principle is also used to show honor to the Torah sage, regardless of his or her age.

¹⁶ No, they are to be treated as a “native born son” who is to be respected and loved as any other Jew (Lev. 19:33-34).

¹⁷ He shall be put to death (Lev. 20:9).

¹⁸ Death to both (Lev. 19:10).

¹⁹ Death to both (Lev. 19:13).

²⁰ No, though we must judge with righteous judgment (John 7:24).

²¹ It means that we are to judge fairly, without partiality, but while using a “good eye” (ayin tovah) by extending the benefit of the doubt (kaf zechut) to all involved. *B’tzedek tishpot amitekha* (בְּצֶדֶק תִּשְׁפֹּט אֶמִיתְּךָ).

²² No. We may only offer correction in humility, with love and respect for the other within our hearts.

²³ Deliberately refusing to give to another in need because he or she once refused to give to you.

²⁴ “Keeping score.” Offering to help someone *even though* they refused to once help you...

²⁵ To love your neighbor as you love yourself; *Ve’ahavta l’reakha kamokha*: וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ.

²⁶ To teach us that though we might naturally fear our father, we must fear our mother equally.

²⁷ 1. Acceptance of the LORD; 2. No other gods (idols); 3. No Name in Vain; 4. Remember Sabbath; 5. Honor Parents; 6. No Murder; 7. No Adultery; 8. No Stealing; 9. No false witness; 10. No Coveting (Cp. Ex. 20:1-17; Lev. 19:1-18).

²⁸ They would be “vomited out of the land” (Lev. 20:22).



Discussion Topics

1. Our Torah portion reveals that sanctifying *time* is a practical way we can express holiness and turn away from idolatry. “Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father and guard my Sabbaths... Do not turn to vanity or make for yourselves any gods” (Lev. 19:3-4). Personal holiness is the “key” that unifies the various laws listed in the Torah, and represents our responsibility to “walk with the LORD” (halakhah). Discuss what connection there is between honoring parents, observing the holidays, and “walking in holiness.”
2. One aspect of holiness is a sense of “separateness” from the prevailing culture. Leviticus Rabbah states that God told Moses, “Tell the Israelites that just as I am separate, so you must be separate; just as I am holy, so you must be holy.” Likewise the Apostle Paul taught that we are to be “conformed” (σύμμορφος) to the Messiah (Rom. 8:29), but *not* “conformed” to the pattern (συσχηματίζω) of this world (Rom. 12:2). The former word means to be made similar in form (μορφή), whereas the latter is a passive verb that means to accept the world’s scheme (σχῆμα) of seeing things. Discuss how you strive to not become “conformed to this world.”
3. On the other hand, the call to practice personal holiness is not to “opt out” of life in this world by becoming a monk or a withdrawn ascetic. On the contrary, the Torah reveals that holiness is to be lived in the everyday experiences of life. How does your practice of holiness influence others in your world? Is your lifestyle a testimony to others of the reality of God?
4. The commandment to love your neighbor “kamocho” (as yourself) is given in connection with *forgiveness*. In Lev. 19:18 we read, *Lo tikkom, v’lo tittor*: “You must not take vengeance or bear a grudge ... but you must love your neighbor as yourself.” In Jewish tradition, “Yom Kippur does not atone until we have made peace with one another.” In light of the greater glory of the New Covenant, this may be stated, “the Cross of Yeshua will not avail you unless you are willing to forgive others for their sins against you” (Matt. 6:14-15). Discuss the connection between forgiveness and love...
5. Immediately after stating that we should not engage in gossip (or lashon hara), the LORD commands: *Lo ta’amod al dam re’ekha*: “You must not stand idly by when your neighbor’s life is at stake” (Lev. 19:16), which suggests that we should not allow our neighbor to be victimized. The sages link speaking evil about another as a type of “standing idly by” because harming someone’s reputation is like taking his life. Another example of “lo ta’amod” would be refusing to come forward with the truth out of fear of the consequences. Discuss...
6. Ultimately the problem we have with “holiness” is that we are decidedly *unholy* people. This is similar to the idea that the Law is “holy, just, and good,” but we are “sold into slavery to sin” (Rom. 7:12-14). But thank God for our Savior Yeshua, who imparts holiness to us and sets us free from the vain attempt to please God through the principle of “self-effort” (1 Cor. 1:30; Titus 3:5; Rom. 8:1-2). Because of Yeshua, we do not work *toward* a place of holiness, but rather *from* the place of His holiness (1 Cor. 15:57). Discuss.

For Next Week:

- Read Parashat **Emor** (Leviticus 21:1-24:23)