

KEDOSHIM – “HOLY”

LEVITICUS (VAY'YIKRA) 19:1 – 20:27

INTRODUCTION

1. Previous portion gives a long list of forbidden practices that lead to spiritual contamination.
 - a. This portion begins the positive responsibility to emulate God – to be holy.
2. We are called to be holy just as God is holy.
 - a. The commandment of this first passage is similar to first tablet of 10 Commands.
 - b. These go deeper in explanation.
3. For instance, not only forbids worship of idols but not to give any regard to them.
 - a. Even if there could be some personal advantage.
4. If section we are going through is “heart of the Torah,” chapter 19 is the “heart of the heart.”
 - a. According to some rabbis, chapter 19 summarizes the essentials of the Torah.
5. The command to be holy because “I the LORD your God am holy” dominates *Vayikra*.
 - a. Dominates the entire Bible – principle of not mixing is repeated again and again.
6. Holy expresses God’s complete freedom from anything that makes mankind imperfect.

CHAPTER 19: HOLINESS

1. Begins by stating this is something that the entire congregation of Israel is responsible for.
 - a. All of Israel is to be holy.

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.” - Exodus 19:5-6

2. This is before the Golden Calf incident but still intimates all Israel was to be holy.
3. To be holy is *קדוש* *kadosh*; a separation from the normal; on a different plane than the secular.
 - a. On the other end of the spectrum is *קדשה* *k'deshah* (from same root).
 - b. This word is translated “harlot” in Deut. 23:17 – separated from norms of society.
4. It is not enough to be “set apart” for sake of being different.
 - a. Must be set apart to emulate the characteristics of God.
5. We cannot imitate His omnipresence, His omniscience or omnipotence.
 - a. We can emulate Him by remaining separate from things that defile.
 - b. This is the highest human ideal – the ultimate act of worship.
 - c. Worship is not music etc., but to emulate and obey the One you love.
6. We can strive to emulate His compassion, mercy and truthfulness.
 - a. In beginning of the Torah, God clothed naked Adam; at end He buried Moses.
 - b. He heals the sick, frees the captives, does good to His enemies and extends mercy.
7. Holiness is not an ethereal, abstract idea but a regulative principle in everyday life.
 - a. It is not determined by what one looks like on the outside.
8. Holiness manifests through different precepts:
 - Reverence for parents.

- Consideration of the needy.
- Prompt wages for reasonable hours.
- Dealing with fellows honorably.
- No tale bearing.
- Love of one's neighbor.
- Treating the stranger with respect.
- Equal justice for rich and poor.
- Abhorrence of unclean things.

9. Holiness is not obtained by fleeing from the world, but by doing what is right while we are in the world.

10. Y'shua said:

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” - Mat 5:14-16

11. Holiness can be described in this manner.

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” - Micah 6:8

12. Someone who only attains the “letter of the law” can easily become a degenerate with the permission of the Torah.

- a. Meeting the technical requirements while surrendering to self-indulgence.

13. Y'shua spoke to this matter.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.” - Matthew 23:23-26

14. God expects more than just an outward appearance of holiness.

- a. In fact, we are to be aware of such.

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”

- 2Timothy 3:1-5

CHAPTER 19: PARENTS, SABBATH, IDOLS AND GLEANINGS

1. Verse 3: “Fear your mother and father” – Neglect of this duty exposes a person’s attitude toward life.
 - a. Literally says, “stand in awe of ...” or how you would act toward a sovereign.
 - b. This is dear to God because honoring parents is akin to honoring Him.
 - c. Feeding them, dressing them, assisting them in any way necessary.
2. Notice that mother is mentioned first to stress that one should *respect* her as much as father.
 - a. Tendency is to give father more respect.
 - b. One should *love* father as much as mother; we tend to love her more.
3. At the end of the previous Torah portion, sexual morality was emphasized.
 - a. Juxtaposed with respect for parents; when someone is immoral it defames parents.
4. In the same verse is the command to observe Sabbaths.
5. Suggested that this is to teach fear of parents is not to exceed fear of God and commitment to obey His Torah.
 - a. If commanded by parents to disobey God, that parental command is to be ignored.
 - b. Even your parents are required to respect the Father’s commands.
 - c. “I am the LORD your God” appears sixteen times in this chapter alone.
6. Verse 4: “Turn not unto idols” – showing regard for God and parents, one is not to allow anything else into this relationship.
 - a. God and parents are what brought you into the world.
 - b. Idols are “molten gods,” literally, “things of naught, non-entities.”
 - c. They literally have no value or power.
7. Verse 5: “When you offer” do it the right way that it may be “accepted.”
 - a. The emphasis is not *that* a sacrifice be brought but *how* it is presented.
 - b. Cain and Abel brought the same thing (*minchah*) but Abel also brought a lamb.
 - c. It was his *minchah* that was accepted; Cain’s was not – it is *how* it is done.
 - d. Must avoid heathen and pagan associations when presenting to God – will be rejected.
8. We must emulate God’s holiness in any way possible:
 - Honor parents.
 - Respect His Sabbaths.
 - Respect His sacred offerings.
9. Because He is merciful and charitable, we must emulate that as well.
 - a. Thus he commands that the corners of fields be left for the poor.
 - b. He does not designate which of the poor it will go to; allows whosoever to glean.
10. Even those things that fall to ground during harvest (gleanings) are left for poor to gather.
11. The one who keeps this command will be blessed with good and plenty.
 - a. The one who gathers all trains himself to be mean spirited and evil will befall him.
 - b. Y’shua spoke of these people.

“The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness.” - Luke 11:34-35

12. Job proclaimed:

“If I held back anything needed by the poor or made a widow's eye grow dim [with tears], or ate my portion of food by myself, without letting the orphan eat any of it — No! From my youth he grew up with me as if with a father, and I have been her guide from my mother's womb! — or if I saw a traveler needing clothing, someone in need who had no covering, who didn't bless me from his heart for being warmed with the fleece from my sheep, or if I lifted my hand against an orphan, knowing that no one would dare charge me in court; then let my arm fall from its socket, and let my forearm be broken at the elbow!”

- Job 31:16-22

13. A characteristic of God's people should be pity for the poor because that is His character.
 - a. Poor permitted to take from the gleanings as they please.
14. Yet, though concerned for poor, He does not require that the person give all.
 - a. Certainly not against his will.
 - b. Exchange between Y'shua and rich man (he had kept all the commands).

“Yeshua said to him, ‘If you are serious about reaching the goal, go and sell your possessions, give to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven. Then come, follow me!’ But when the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he was wealthy. Then Yeshua said to his *talmidim*, ‘Yes. I tell you that it will be very hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Furthermore, I tell you that it is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.’ ” - Matthew 19:21-24

CHAPTER 19: HONEST DEALINGS WITH OTHERS

1. Verse 11: “Do not steal or deal falsely or lie” – these things are never the norm in a nation.
 - a. If they were, entire society would break down (perhaps that is why we're in trouble).
 - b. There are subtler elements to these sins and nations are lax in these ethics.
2. For instance, here are a few examples:
 - Deceiving others in business.
 - Deny obligations that cannot be proven.
 - Swear by God's name to convince someone that a lie is true.
 - Underpay laborers.
 - Reclaim something that is yours by stealth is perceived as stealing.
3. Stealing the good opinion of others is considered forbidden.
4. Determined to be misrepresentation for publicity; deceiving others into having a flattering opinion – false modesty.
 - a. Absalom ingratiated himself to the people of Israel (2 Sam. 15:2-6).
 - b. “So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.”
5. Do not lie includes avoiding lengthy explanations – let your “yes” be “yes” and “no” be “no.”
 - a. Truth is the pillar the Universe - it is God's seal (אמת *emet*).
6. All such conduct is wrong and applies not just the perpetrator but those who aid and abet.
7. This verse shows the progression of sin: some steals, then lies to cover it up and swears falsely to shift the focus somewhere else.
 - a. This chain reaction is typical.
 - b. Person will see it as normal or is provoked by it to perform other sins to cover it up.
8. Verse 12: Forbidden to swear falsely by God's name – demonstrates no respect for God.

9. Verse 13: “Do not cheat” is synonymous with withholding a worker’s wage or deceitfully keeping something you know to belong to someone else.
 - a. If a worker needs his wage that day, you are not to withhold it til tomorrow.
 - b. Doesn’t conflict with situation where person is paid weekly or bi-weekly.
10. Verse 14: “Do not curse the deaf” – even though he cannot hear it.
 - a. So it most certainly forbidden to curse those who can hear it.
 - b. Allegorically, should not give evil advice to unsuspecting or undiscerning person.
 - c. Especially if the bad advice gives you an advantage.
 - d. Do not lead morally weak into sin or provoke them to make mistakes.
11. Examples given:
 - Tempting a Nazirite to break vow and drink wine.
 - Selling lethal weapons to dangerous or criminal persons.
 - Provoking someone to anger.
12. Thus, we are responsible for the welfare of others – we are our brother’s keeper.
13. Accentuated by reminder to “fear God.”
 - a. Person guilty might say he had best intentions but God knows the heart.
14. Verse 15: Must not pervert justice.
 - a. A judge who rules falsely is guilty of perverting justice.
 - b. Person who lies to judge about facts perverts justice.
 - c. Not to favor the poor or rich; must be rendered honestly without charity interfering.
 - d. The case can be made that socialism perverts justice.
15. Committing an error and, instead of acknowledging it, trying to justify it with torturous logic is perversion of justice.
16. Verse 16: “Don’t be a gossipmonger” – even if true, don’t repeat things that will cause harm.
17. Literally says, “don’t go up and down as a peddler.”
 - a. Instead of goods, goes about dealing in scandal and malicious hearsay.
 - b. He retails the secrets of people and destroys their reputation.
18. Because this sin has been cause of bloodshed, it is linked to prohibition of not standing by while your fellowman’s blood is shed.
 - a. Again, you are your brother’s keeper.
 - b. Should try and defend someone who is being attacked to save him.
 - c. At the expense of my own life?

CHAPTER 19: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

1. Verse 17: “Do not hate your brother in your heart; reprove your brother.”
 - a. Even if he wronged you, he is your brother.
 - b. Yet, reprove him if he is wrong.
2. This can be very difficult to do with tact and delicacy even as it is hard to receive reproof.
 - a. You can do the right thing the wrong way – not to embarrass them.
 - b. Should reprove yourself first.
3. You cannot reprove others if you think you do no wrong.
 - a. Recognizing your own shortcomings helps one to empathize with other and their sin.
 - b. Once you have removed the beam from your eye, remove the speck from his.
 - c. Reproving can be done a little at a time in some situations.
 - d. In this you demonstrate you have his interests in mind, not hating him in your heart.

4. “Do not bear a sin because of him.”
 - a. In not mentioning his wrongdoing toward you, may develop resentment in your heart.
 - b. In reproving someone the wrong way you incur a sin.
5. Verse 18 – “Do not take vengeance” or “bear a grudge” - the natural progression of things.
 - a. When wronged this is what people typically wish to do.
 - b. To suppress this inclination helps us to love instead of hate.
6. Taught that, in addition to refraining from doing them harm, this prohibition includes refusing to help that person with something he needs that you would have ordinarily done.
7. Some of the Bible’s good examples:
 - Joseph’s conduct toward his brothers.
 - David’s attitude toward Saul.
8. “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” – the second command like unto the first.
 - a. The first being, “Love the LORD your God (completely).
 - b. Rabbi Akiva says “love your neighbor” is primary rule of the Torah.
 - c. One does not harm, harass or steal from one he loves.
9. If one loves God with all his heart, God gets to make the rules, including loving neighbor.
10. In *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* it says:

“If a man sin against you . . . speak peaceably to him. If he confess and repent, forgive him. But if he be shameless and persist in his wrongdoing, even so forgive him from the heart and leave to God the avenging. Beware of hatred; for it works lawlessness even against the LORD Himself.”

11. Y’shua said this on the matter:

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”
 - Matthew 6:14-15

12. Perhaps this is one of the hardest of the commands to keep; predicated on first and greatest.
13. To love your neighbor is believed to be the “whole Torah” with everything else being commentary on this fundamental principle.

CHAPTER 19: FORBIDDEN MIXTURES

1. The Hebrew word is כלאים *kil’ayim* and comes from the root word that means to “imprison.”
 - a. When we mix with things God has pronounced unclean, spiritually we are imprisoned.
2. These are statutes known as *chukkot* and are understood to be commands whose meaning is not obvious to most.
 - a. Rashi says that the reason for these commands is not known.
 - b. I personally disagree with Rashi because Y’shua revealed to us the intent in Mark 4.
 - c. The parable of the sower teaches of one good seed and is basis for other parables.
 - d. Parable of wheat and tare tells us why we are not to mingle seed – corruption.
3. Nachmanides teaches that these laws are to be understood as teaching God’s Creation should be allowed to function according to laws of nature without interference and tampering from man.
 - a. No cloning, no GMOs, etc.

- b. Put simply, things God declared “apart” should remain “apart.”
- c. On other hand, man is to “improve” and this doesn’t apply to alloys for instance.
- 4. When it comes to mingling seed, it includes grafting of plants and trees.
 - a. This is why in Romans 11, a wild OLIVE branch is grafted into the olive tree.
 - b. Couldn’t be another tree, therefore there are ramifications of Paul’s statement.
- 5. Verse 20 describes another type or forbidden mixture in moral relationship.
 - a. Suggesting that the natural (forbidden mixture) teaches of the spiritual.
 - b. Paul tells us this principle in 1 Corinthians 15:46.
- 6. Verse 23: Fruits from first 3 years are considered defective and not for human consumption.
 - a. The three years begin when trees are planted even if no fruit grows that year.
 - b. Those of the fourth year are considered holy and are consumed in Jerusalem (temple).
 - c. In the fifth year, they may be eaten; obedience promises bountiful fruit.
- 7. If one deprives his inclinations in obedience, that self-denial will be rewarded.
 - a. Do this because “I am YHVH your God.”
 - b. It states this is for “when you come to the land (of Israel).
 - c. Yet, I argue the principle is the same outside of the land.
 - d. If one keeps the command and the fruit is bountiful, less time spent on labor for food.
 - e. More time to learning His commands to keep them.

CHAPTER 19: PROHIBITION OF CANAANITE CUSTOMS

- 1. Verse 26: “Do not indulge in sorcery” – don’t base decisions on superstitions.
 - Black cats.
 - Walking under ladders.
 - The number 13.
 - Lucky or unlucky numbers or days.
- 2. Verse 27: “Don’t round the corner of your head...mar the edges of the beard.”
 - a. Next two verses forbid practices associated with mourning or venerating the dead.
- 3. Not unlawful to shave because there are many examples of people shaving.
 - Joseph shaved before appearing before Pharaoh.
 - The priests shaved their bodies.
 - The Nazirite shaved his head.
 - The *metzora* shaved his body.
 - Job shaved his head.
 - Y’shua commanded the cleansed leper to go to Jerusalem – commands to shave.
- 4. Verse 28: “Don’t make cuttings for the dead...no marks on you” – body is handiwork of God.
 - a. Not to cut themselves in paganistic ritual like those of Canaan.
 - b. Elijah encountered this on Mt. Carmel with prophets of Ba’al.
 - c. Tattooing is also forbidden because it was associated with deity worship.
 - d. Tattooing involves “cutting” into skin and injecting ink leaving a mark.
- 5. Verse 29: “Do not profane your daughter” – by making her a harlot.
 - a. This is tantamount to profaning God’s holiness.
 - b. Hints that this kind of perversion will cause the land to become filled with perversion.
- 6. Verse 30: “Observe my Sabbaths” – is to regard God as creator.
 - a. To disregard Sabbath (God as Creator) is equivalent to idol worship.
- 7. Verse 31: Turn not to familiar spirits for divination purposes.

- a. In turning to them for knowledge, you disregard the only One who can foretell.
- b. Israel seeks its way through God's prophets and His Torah.
- 8. Verse 32: To revere those who are older – white with age.
 - a. God looks upon this as honoring Him thus, “and you shall revere your God.”
- 9. Verse 33-34: It is forbidden to taunt a stranger (גֵר *ger*) – he is not a second-class citizen.
 - a. He is as one of the home-born for there is one law for all.
 - b. To love him like yourself because you were a stranger in Egypt.
- 10. It is a very serious matter:

“Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’ ” – Deut. 27:19

- 11. Verses 35-36 – Proper Weights and Measures
 - a. To neglect this is to pervert justice.
 - b. Business man who falsifies weights is like a judge who perverts justice.
- 12. This is connected to the unjust bondage of Egypt from which God delivered them.
 - a. They should not, then, be unjust with someone else.
 - b. Even if a person owes you money, you must not doctor weights and measures.
- 13. Don't think you can do it without me noticing – He noticed those without the blood on door.

CHAPTER 20: PENALTIES FOR THESE FORBIDDEN PRACTICES

- 1. We've looked at a long list of commands; this chapter details the punishment.
- 2. The first mentioned is worship of Molech which pollutes the land.
 - a. Not only does he sin against God but profaned the Sanctuary.
- 3. The penalty is death; the land itself kills the perpetrator.
 - a. The offender was either pushed off a cliff or stoned with stones.
 - b. Either the land that was polluted rises up to exact vengeance upon the person.
- 4. Verse 4: “If the people of the land avert their eyes” - they will be held responsible.
 - a. Once you avert your eyes once, you will do it again.
 - b. For the authorities and nation to condone this is evidence of social decay.
 - c. Only if courts and the people are consistent in justice can they function properly.
 - d. Of course, if they aren't consistent in justice then ...?
- 5. Verse 6: Those who turn to ghosts and familiar spirits will be cut off.
- 6. Not to realize the necessity of this prohibition is to fall victim to idea that witchcraft is harmless make-believe that requires no drastic punishment.
 - a. This is to be indifferent to the fact that there is one God, creator of heaven and earth.
 - b. Halloween and Harry Potter just fantasy and harmless?
 - c. To engage in this or condone is to mix with forbidden practices.
- 7. Verse 7: “Sanctify yourselves” – efforts to be set apart will be rewarded with God's help.
 - a. Test of holiness is not outward appearance and behavior.
 - b. One can adopt the garb and habits of holiness.
 - c. True test comes in private matters and things we have no control over.
- 8. Next section deals with penalties for forbidden relationships or mixtures.
 - a. These were covered in the previous Torah portion.
 - b. Verse 16: a woman and a beast – both are killed.

- c. Reminds me of Revelation 17 – a harlot riding a beast; both are doomed.
- 9. Verse 22-23: Reminded that to engage in these activities will cause land to vomit you out.
 - a. Thus possessing the land is dependent upon maintaining a state of holiness.
 - b. We are not to adopt the habits and customs of the nations.
 - c. They were vomited out for doing these things.
 - d. We have been set apart to live by His principles (verse 24).
- 10. Verse 26: “And I have separated you ... to be mine” – if we keep ourselves set apart.
 - a. If not then we belong “to Nebuchadnezzar and his colleagues.”
 - b. I.e. will go into exile and assimilated into those nations and lose identity.
- 11. Thus we are exhorted to “come out of her and be separate.”
- 12. If we do separate ourselves, God will separate us as His.
 - a. If we don't, the nations will separate us from them – for persecution and expulsion.
 - b. Egypt is an example of this.
 - c. This is the basis for all of the tyrants and despots who have oppressed Israel.
 - d. Because they did not separate themselves.