

CHEVRAH TORAH 5778...Seeking ✧ Spirituality

Shabbat Kedoshim

LEVITICUS 19:1-4...13-18,33-37

KEY KOSHI:

HOW DO WE FULFILL THE CALL OF “K'DOSHIM TIHYU”?

WHAT DOES BEING HOLY MEAN FOR THE WAY WE LIVE OUT OUR ✧SPIRITUALITY?

P'SHAT—AWARENESS... The beginning of knowing about God is simply paying attention, being fully present where you are

19:1] The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2] speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy. 3] You shall each revere his mother and his father, and keep My sabbaths: I the Lord am your God. 4] Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves: I the Lord am your God.

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 Lord. 15] You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your kinsman fairly. 16] Do not deal basely with your countrymen. Do not profit by the blood of your fellow: I am the Lord. 17] You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt because of him. 18] You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the Lord.

33] When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. 34] The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the Lord am your God. 35] You shall not falsify measures of length, weight or capacity. 36] You shall have an honest balance, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin. I the Lord am your God who freed you from the land of Egypt. 37] You shall faithfully observe all My laws and all My rules: I am the Lord.

1 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 2 דַּבֵּר אֶל־כָּל־עַדְת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדוֹשִׁים תְּהִיוּ כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: 3 אִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: 4 אַל־תִּפְנוּ אֶל־הָאֱלִילִים וְאֱלֹהֵי מִסְכָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: 13 לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂק אֶת־רֵעֶךָ וְלֹא תִגְזֹל לֹא־תִלְוֶן פְּעֻלַּת שָׂכִיר אִתָּךְ עַד־בֹּקֶר: 14 לֹא־תִקַּל חֵרֶשׁ וְלִפְנֵי עוֹר לֹא תִתֵּן מַכְשָׁל וַיִּרְאֵת מֵאֲלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה: [שְׁנִי] [חֲמִישִׁי כִשְׁהוֹן מְחֻבְּרִין] 15 לֹא־תַעֲשׂוּ עוֹל בְּמִשְׁפָּט לֹא־תִשָּׂא בְּצַדֵּק תִּשְׁפֹּט עַמִּיתֶךָ: 16 לֹא־תִתְּלֹךְ רֵכִיל בְּעַמִּיךָ לֹא תַעֲמֹד עַל־דַּם רֵעֶךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה: 17 לֹא־תִשְׁנֵא אֶת־אָחִיךָ בַּלְבָּבָהּ הוֹכַח וְנֹכַח אֶת־עַמִּיתֶךָ וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֲטָא: 18 לֹא־תִקֹּם וְלֹא־תִטַּר אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאֶהְבֵּת לִרְעֶךָ כְּמוֹד אֲנִי יְהוָה: 33 וְכִי־יָגוּר אִתָּךְ גֵּר בְּאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תוֹנוּ אֹתוֹ: 34 כָּאֲזָרַח מִכֶּם יְהִיֶה לָכֶם הַגֵּר | הַגֵּר אִתְּכֶם וְאֶהְבֵּת לוֹ כְּמוֹד כִּי־גֵרִים הֵייתֶם בְּאַרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: 35 לֹא־תַעֲשׂוּ עוֹל בְּמִשְׁפָּט בְּמִדָּה בְּמִשְׁקָל וּבְמִשׁוֹרָה: 36 מֵאֲזַנִּי צֶדֶק אֲבַנֶּי צֶדֶק אֵיפֶת צֶדֶק וְהִין צֶדֶק יְהִיֶה לָכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: 37 וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־כָּל־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־כָּל־מִשְׁפָּטַי וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם אֲנִי יְהוָה:

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'zivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

REMEZ—UN-SELF-AWARENESS...

v.2 *Then Adonai spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the whole congregation of Israel saying to them:*

You shall be holy, for I, Adonai your God, am holy...

ALSHECH... *“v’amarta aleyhem—Is this not superfluous?...In order that you should not think that Israel was assembled only so those with latent ability to become holy could hear, Torah repeats “v’amarta—and tell them all”* The imperative implies—every Jew is capable of achieving the objective.

R’ Elie MUNK... Kedoshim appears as a beacon which sends rays of the holiness-ideal over the whole panorama of human existence. The ideal of holiness is not based on the norms of common sense or rational behavior. Instead, it is a unique concept inherent in Creation—a concept specifically assigned to the People Israel as an end in itself...The Holy ONE who created the world through distinctions, between light and darkness, waters and land...between Shabbat and the six days of the week, *“between Israel and the nations.”* Israel must rise beyond its nature to achieve holiness...

RASHI... Be removed from *arayot*—sexual immorality, and from sin, for wherever you find such restriction of sexual immorality, there you will find *kedushab*...

RAMBAN... Holiness refers to self-restraint. Sanctify yourself through that which is permitted...

“K’doshim tihyu”—be moderate in fulfilling desires and pursuing your passions.

HaK’TAV v’HaKABBALAH... I do not believe that the type of holiness mentioned by RASHI is that which TORAT KOHANIM contents itself when it comments, *“P’rushim Tih’yu—be apart!”* The fact is that although Torah imposed limitations on eating habits and sex life...it left enough permissible for a person to lead a very indulgent life...to indulge the libido incessantly without violating the commandments...

By abstaining from all which is expressly forbidden, one has not yet lived up to Torah’s ethical imperative—*“to do what is right and good.”*

R’ Moshe Chayim LUZATTO... *“K’doshim Tihyu”*—not separate, but holy...Whatever the circumstances, the austerity and abstinence of one’s daily actions should never hinder the duty of sociability included in the mitzvah of living a holy life.

R’ Baruch LEVINE... *“K’doshim tih’yu—You shall be holy,”* Rather, *“You must be holy!”* The verse is distinctive in that it provides the rationale for the commandment: Israel must be holy because God is holy. To have a close relationship with God, the people must emulate the *Holy One*.

ZOHAR... *“for I, Adonai, your God—Eloheychem, am holy...”* Not as in the Ten Utterances, *“elohaycha—your God.”*...For at Sinai the people were wholly united—of one heart and mind, and thus addressed as one. This degree of unity is never again achieved, so Israel is addressed here in the plural.

SIFRA... *“You shall be K’doshim—holy”* is written without the vav, incomplete...But *“for I am Kadosh”* is written with the vav, complete. This reminds that God alone is holy, as we are ever striving to be.

ALSHECH... The One who tells you to strive to become holy is The HOLY ONE, who is—as it were, *THE LORD YOUR GOD* only if you strive to achieve this goal. God is saying that His own description as *“Ani Adonai Eloheychem,”* depends upon your actualizing the *kedusha* that He represents.

TORAT KOHANIM... *“Holy shall you be...”* For when you sanctify yourselves, I consider it as if you have sanctified Me.

SeFAS EMES... *“You shall be holy,* This section was spoken in public assembly, thus no one can attain *kedushab* except be negating himself. For it continues *“I the Lord your God am holy”* Holiness, too, has to be so that we merit being attached to God...Our holiness should not be separated off in this way of self-glorification, but should be solely for the sake of coming closer to The Holy ONE...

R’ Art GREEN... The perfection of the self as an end in itself can be idolatry, a kind of spiritual self-aggrandizement...Here the SeFAS EMES seems to foresee something of the danger in recent “New Age” joining of the search for self-realization and the quest for God. These two are indeed deeply related...but the essential value of self-transcendence makes all the difference...Only humility and the negation of the self which allows one to join with all Israel—and we would add, in spiritual solidarity, with all humankind—can make room for God’s Presence.

D'RASH—READING BETWEEN THE WORDS...

Rabbi SHLOMO RISKIN...

Kadosh (the holy) expresses the goal and defining characteristic of our nation and the central commandment of this week's portion: "*You shall be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy*" [Lev. 19:2].

Rudolf Otto, in "The Idea of the Holy," sees God's holiness as expressing the "mystical numinous," a wholly otherness and awesome uniqueness. God is above and beyond the material or physical. He is totally free of the limitations of nature and human nature. From this perspective, human beings achieve holiness when they too are free of those limitations, as well.

For Judaism, however, true holiness can be achieved by living one's life by God's laws rather than giving up one's life for those laws.

...What is the path to holiness in daily living? It is by serving God through fulfillment of His commandments, and especially by loving our fellow human being—what Rabbi Akiba called "the greatest rule of the Torah," "*You must love your neighbor as you love yourself, I am the Lord*" [Lev. 19:18].

Instinctively, every human being sees himself as the center of the universe, and always looks out for "No. 1." To love another means to leave room for another, to give of oneself to the other, to take from one's material possessions in order to make certain that the other is provided for. Indeed, the Hebrew word for love, *ahavah*, comes from the root verb *hav*, which means *give*.

...God is the source of sanctity: the ultimate Lover and Giver. The Kabbalah teaches that God constricted and constrained Himself (*tzimtzum*) to leave room for the other, for us. He did this because, as Rav Haim Vital explains, the God of consummate love must have people other than Himself to love. These must be people with the capacity to choose against His will in order to truly be other, to be His partners and not His pawns. And it is His love for us and belief in us that will eventually empower us to choose in accordance with His will, and to partner with Him in perfecting the world...

To be like God and to walk in God's ways means to love just as He loves and gives to us.

[Sabbath Week, "The Jewish Week," April 23, 2010]

R' David NELSON...

Kedoshim opens with the statement, "*You shall be holy, KEE, Adonai, your God am holy.*"

The understanding of this entire verse—indeed, the holiness code itself, rests on this word.

Although it has many definitions, most translations have chosen "...for I Adonai am holy."

This suggests that our people's holiness depends upon God's holiness...

Often, however, KEE introduces a law with an "IF—THEN" structure, where the first part sets up a situation and the second part describes the result...If we were to use this meaning in *Kedoshim*, we would translate "*You shall be holy IF/WHEN I, Adonai, your God am holy.*" God's holiness, then, may be intricately linked to our own. In other words, God's Being and our being are in symbiosis—or covenant. In this covenant, we are holy only when God is holy; conversely, God is holy only when we are holy. If we imagine a covenant of mutual interdependence between partners rather than a powerful God issuing absolutes...our welfare and God's become inextricably intertwined.

SOD—The SELF of the UNIVERSE... God's "I am" has the psycho-theological force not of dissolving individual selves but of reminding us that we were never individual selves in the first place...Our selfhood endures by virtue of its participation in some greater Self,

Rabbi LARRY HOFFMAN..

What is holiness? The Jewish answer is both complex and surprising. It runs counter to what most people believe. Common wisdom assumes that the opposite of "holy" is the very negative sounding "profane." In Hebrew, however, the opposite of KoDeSH is CHOL—ordinary, with no negativity at all. The Holy is just "extraordinary" in the sense of transcending the ordinary human and being like God. "Be Holy," we are told, "because I, Adonai, your God am Holy."

If the opposite of holy were profane, we might reasonably be expected to strive for holiness all the time. Not so, if the opposite is "everyday." Judaism values the everyday—going for a walk, watching a baseball game, or relaxing with a book. We have been given a world where it is actually sinful to refuse such pleasures.

As the only species made in God's image, however, it is equally sinful not to pursue the sacred, as well. Human life is both ordinary (chol) and extraordinary (kodesh). We revel in both. What we may not be is less than ordinary, which is to say, not just less than God, but also less than properly human. *"Where there is no humanity, strive to be human."*

We spend most of our lives being quite ordinary, then, but we are hard-wired to seek the Godlike extraordinary, too.

...This Jewish perspective has much to say to our time. On one hand, a puritanical strain in Western thought treats holiness as some ethereal quality for angels and ascetics; we lesser beings should at least not overly enjoy such "profane" pleasures as food, sex, and leisure. On the other hand, crass materialism grudgingly admits the profane but urges us to enjoy only the ordinary, since that is all there is. By contrast, Judaism prohibits the profane, but welcomes both the holy and the ordinary. We want to be like God, but we are sometimes just human; we enjoy being human, but have a part of us that is like God.

The Malbim says that this parashah was delivered to everyone at Sinai, but each individual heard what was appropriate to his or her own degree of holiness. Holiness, then, is not the solitary province of saints. It comes in many fits, some more attuned to one personality than another. Goodness is the only form that is common to us all, since the opposite of goodness is evil, the supreme example of the profane. But we may pick and choose among the others, some of us becoming artists; others, inventors; others still, magnificent parents, or masters of connecting with people in meaningful ways.

We are all ordinary—and extraordinary. Just as we enjoy different ordinary pleasures, so too we specialize in different extraordinary gifts. We can all fulfill the characteristic refrain of our sedra: *"You shall be holy, for I am holy."* But we temper that by adding, "You shall each be holy in your own distinctive way."

[Sabbath Week, "The Jewish Week," May 2, 2008]