

Drash on Kedoshim (Lev. 19:1-20:27)

Ahavat Yeshua DC Service

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David L. Craig

The name of Parashat Kedoshim is derived from the fourteenth Hebrew word which, according to its Wikipedia article, means *holy ones*. Kedoshim is the second parashat within that part of Leviticus called the Holiness Code by the Bible critics, believed by most to have a similar significance, situation, and structure to that of the Covenant Code I discussed in my drash on Parashat Mishpatim this past January. Like Mishpatim, Kedoshim contains 51 of Maimonides' 613 commands, though 13 positive and 38 negative. These two portions contain one sixth of all 613. While the Holiness Code does not begin with this parashat, its name and focus *is* holiness. Herein we hear the heart of the Holiness Code.

It helps to know just what *holiness is*, then. The essence of the root *kadosh* is all about separation and not implicitly about God. In Israel you might *kadosh* the whites in your laundry from the non-whites, setting them apart to be laundered differently, perhaps with bleach.

Holy is not a Hebrew word, and its etymology from Old English and Old German apparently described either wholeness in one's health or something that must be maintained whole—not taken apart. It may not have originally had any religious connection.

Another word often interchangeable with *holy* is *sacred*, although that usually has an affinity for non-living things while *holy* is preferred for living things. Then there's *sanctify*, an action verb for impelling something unholy, common, or profane to become holy and/or sacred, although it can be used in present tense to simply affirm that something is already holy and/or sacred. The word *consecrate* is a synonym of *sanctify* while *desecrate* is an antonym.

Now we are prepared for the readings from The Torah. Yah-a-mod, Yonatan ben Daniel v'Patricia. Jonathan will read for us, in Hebrew from the Torah and in English from the Complete Jewish Bible translation, three subsections of Leviticus 19—verses 1 and 2, then 17 and 18, and lastly 33 and 34:

¹ Adonai said to Moshe, ² "Speak to the entire community of Isra'el; tell them, You people are to be holy because I, Adonai your God, am holy. [...] ¹⁷ Do not hate your brother in your heart, but rebuke your neighbor frankly, so that you won't carry sin because of him. ¹⁸ Don't take vengeance on or bear a grudge against any of your people; rather, love your neighbor as yourself; I am Adonai. [...] ³³ If a foreigner stays with you in your land, do not do him wrong. ³⁴ Rather, treat the foreigner staying with you like the native-born among you — you are to love him as yourself, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt; I am Adonai your God.'"

First note this parashat changes the group Adonai is speaking to in Leviticus, moving from *just* the priests and other Levites to *all* Israel.

The Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon says the instances of *holy* in verse two mean *separate from human infirmity, impurity, and sin*; i.e., all Israelites are to be without human infirmity, impurity, and sin, because Adonai is without human infirmity, impurity, and sin. Of course, there is much more to the holiness of Adonai than mere absence of human shortcomings, as considered in an article entitled [Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh](#) at [Hebrew4Christians.com](#) (note repeating a word three times usually makes it superlative, thus the title means *most separate*):

The holy is singular, awe-inspiring, even "terrible" or dreadful. The Holy One is utterly unique, distinct, sacred, and set apart as the only One of its kind. He alone is worthy of true worship and adoration, since He alone is utterly peerless, without rival, and stands in relation to the world as Creator and Lord. Yes, only the Lord is infinitely and eternally Other -- known to Himself as "I AM THAT I AM".

Now we are compelled to very soberly revere His unique *otherness*. However, the BDB definition is precisely what *we* should be while in this realm. And yet, this command to *be holy* is not considered the greatest in Judaism or Christianity. Indeed, it is not even considered to be a commandment—not one of the 613. Rather, it expresses what the objective or result of *all* Israel obeying *all* the commandments will be.

Here within the preeminent Holiness Code parashat, we have the Torah's words commanding all Israelites to love their neighbors as themselves, and it explicitly includes the non-Israelites living among them as neighbors. Yeshua was asked to define *neighbor* in this context at one point, from which came the explanation called the Good Samaritan, a reference that few today in our culture do not recognize and most understand.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua expounded upon the verses Jonathan read. Yah-a-mod, Elaine bat Benyameen Moshe. My dear wife will read for us Matthew chapter 5 verses 38 through 48 from the Complete Jewish Version.

³⁸ You have heard that our fathers were told, 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.' ³⁹ But I tell you not to stand up against someone who does you wrong. On the contrary, if someone hits you on the right cheek, let him hit you on the left cheek too! ⁴⁰ If someone wants to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well! ⁴¹ And if a soldier forces you to carry his pack for one mile, carry it for two! ⁴² When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow something from you, lend it to him.

⁴³ You have heard that our fathers were told, 'Love your neighbor – and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵ Then you will become children of your Father in heaven. For he makes his

sun shine on good and bad people alike, and he sends rain to the righteous and the unrighteous alike.⁴⁶ What reward do you get if you love only those who love you? Why, even tax-collectors do that!⁴⁷ And if you are friendly only to your friends, are you doing anything out of the ordinary? Even the *Goyim* do that!⁴⁸ Therefore, be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Regarding that last verse, if we quite reasonably retranslate *perfect* into *holy*, do we not have Leviticus chapter 19 verse 2?

Therefore, be holy, just as your Father in heaven is holy.

When people observe you loving your enemies, some will want to know *why*, because you will be *very* separate from most other people they have encountered.

Around the time young Yeshua made quite an impression at the Temple, the great rabbi [Hillel the Elder](#) died. So it may be possible he and Yeshua discussed theology during those few days. As recorded in [Shabbat 31a.6 of the Babylonian Talmud](#) as translated at [Seferia.org](#), Hillel said:

That which is hateful to you do not do to another; that is the entire Torah, and the rest is its interpretation.

Note that command is not written verbatim in the Tenach, and while it makes no distinction between Adonai and human beings, by implying the doer has a correct understanding of all that should be hateful to him, all such God/human distinctions are also implied.

In Matthew chapter 7 verse 12, nearing the conclusion of the Sermon, Yeshua either paraphrased or independently thought up what Hillel had said:

¹² Always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that sums up the teaching of the *Torah* and the Prophets.

That's the Holiness Code in one verse. Actually, that's the entire Tenach in one verse, which proves the centrality of parashat *Kedoshim* and the Holiness Code around it.

So how does all this affect us? Yeshua's expansion of the realm of sin into one's thoughts laid to rest the idea that it is humanly possible to be holy as God is holy. Yet that *is* so expected; thus, it has to be *possible* to be holy as God is holy. The crucial question springs up: *How can we be holy as God is holy?* When, in Matthew chapter 19 verses 23 through 26, the talmidim wondered how anyone can receive salvation, Yeshua said:

²⁶ Humanly, this is impossible; but with God everything is possible.

Well, okay, but *how*, already?!

There are two keys involved, both totally *with God*: *believe* and *obey*. Start with believing Yeshua's sacrifice once-for-all covers all our failures to be holy. However, and more importantly, to stop sinning

in the first place, we *must* keep in step with The Ruach H'Kodesh Who dwells within us. This is precisely what Yeshua Himself did following His water immersion, during which the Ruach entered Him and immediately began leading Him, in His case, out into the wilderness to be tested after fasting for forty days. Thus, He exemplified for us *how* to be holy. His choices were *always* to deny Himself, carefully listening to His Father and The Spirit and maintaining compliance with that guidance even while validating its conformance to The Word. Eventually Peter learned to do this, as did John, the rest of the 120, Hananiah in Damascus, and then Paul, too, and so on. We, as well, can do this! We have been empowered to exercise authority over any thoughts to the contrary! So, as Ben Juster preached last Shabbat, *believe* the Word, show those thoughts no mercy and *make* them submit to the Mind of Messiah! *Believe* our old natures have been crucified with Messiah and we have been empowered to keep them from resurrecting themselves until we receive our new bodies that will not include our old natures. Seek help from your wiser brothers and sisters in the Body when you are experiencing difficulty walking out any of the disciplines. Then enjoy the good God does through you and rejoice your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

CHECK TIME—IF LESS THAN 35 SECONDS:

Alas, there's no more time, so visit dlcusa.net to read the postscript if you're interested, probably up tonight.

ELSE:

P.S. Yeshua must have *always* ensured every thought He had conformed to The Word, else He could not have been without sin. The mechanics of His unique childhood development remain a mystery. If, however, *you* have more limbs than memorized Scriptures, *always* asking "How do I follow [the Golden Rule](#) in this situation?" will take you far while you diligently become well-versed.

END WITH:

The next parashat is *Emor* which spans Leviticus chapter 21 verse 1 through chapter 24 verse 33.