

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 31

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KEDOSHIM

6th Iyar 5776

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 19, verses 1 -14

- ✚ Hashem commands Moshe to speak to Bnai Yisrael ordering them to become holy because I Hashem your g-d is holy. Hashem then details a series of laws that will assist Bnai Yisrael in achieving this goal.
- ✚ The first steps in becoming holy is be in awe of and revere your parents, keeping Shabbat and the prohibitions of any idol worship.
- ✚ Holiness is also accomplished by leaving any gleanings in the field after it's produce has been harvested, for the poor to gather up, refrain from stealing, lying, swearing falsely and withholding any money or wages owed to an employee on time.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 19, verses 15 - 22

- ✚ The path towards holiness continues with the prohibitions of cursing the deaf, putting stumbling blocks in front of the blind, perverting the cause for justice and taking bribes, gossiping, taking revenge and bearing a grudge against someone.
- ✚ One of the most fundamental and famous principle is then quoted here. "Loving your neighbour like yourself"
- ✚ Next, the laws of Shatnez (forbidden mixtures) are discussed including cross breeding, planting a field with mixed types of seeds and wearing any garment made from wool and linen combined.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 19, verses 23 - 32

- ✚ The commandments regarding orla (The laws prohibiting us to consume produce from a fruit tree during its first three years of growth) are mentioned. On the tree's fourth year the fruit is to be sanctified to Hashem and in the fifth and consecutive years after, the fruit can then be eaten by anyone.
- ✚ Other prohibitions along with their punishments are cited here. These include performing acts of sorcery or delving into the occult, cutting oneself as a sign of mourning, having a tattoo and shaving off ones hair completely.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 19, verses 33 – 37

- ✚ The laws continue with respecting and honouring a rabbi, sage and the elderly, and the prohibitions of against immoral behaviours.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 20, verses 1 - 7

- ✚ Next comes the laws concerning how Scales, weights and measures of all types must be correct so that no one is short-changed and the prohibition against worshipping the Molech and the importance of keeping kosher.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 20, verses 8 – 22 and

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 20, verses 23 - 27

- ✚ The remainder of parshas Kedoshim states the specific punishments that Bait Din would administer for the fifteen prohibited sexual relationships listed at the end of Acharei Mot and the concept of holiness as the means for being separate from the other nations.
- ✚ Finally the torah explains that Eretz Yisrael, Bnai Yisrael, and time in general are intended to reflect the integration of Godliness into the daily lives of all us; in order to realize our mission as the "Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation" that will be the degree to which we retain the right to dwell in the Land of Israel in peace.

Haftorah – Amos, Chapter 9, verses 7 to 15

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ This week's Haftorah is the one that we normally recite for Acharei Mos.
- ✚ Amos the Navi began by chastising Bnai Yisrael for being no better than the Pilishtim (Philistines) or the Arameans (Aramean's) who were also saved from oppression and enslavement but did not cherish the opportunity that we were given of having a closer bond with Hashem by becoming His chosen nation.
- ✚ King Yiravam II extended the boundaries of the northern kingdom of Israel but upon hearing Amos's prophecy that his kingdom would not last; tried to banish Amos from the land.
- ✚ Amos criticized the kingdom for persecuting the poor and immersing themselves in materialism and luxury and explained to the Jewish people that their primary destruction will be directed against their leaders of the kingdom while the populace would be driven into golus (exile).
- ✚ However, because of Hashem's kindness, Amos finishes his prophecy stating that the Davidic dynasty will one day be rebuilt, culminating in the coming of Moshiach, ending the golus,

GEMATRIA LINKED TO THE SEDRA:

- ✚ In this weeks' Parsha, the torah forbids us to destroy our beards. ולא תשחית ולא V'lo tash'hit "And you shall not destroy" (which in gematria equates to 1,155).
- ✚ The numerical value of the phrase "This is with a blade, not Scissors." Also adds up to 1,155.
- ✚ From this we learn that while the Torah prohibits the use of a razor blade, you would be allowed to use scissors.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

Kedoshim is a beautiful and important moral and ethical Parsha. It begins with a verse which is so inspiring that there is a vast number of essays and debates about its true meaning. "And Hashem said to Moshe, saying: Speak to the congregation of the children of Israel and say to them: 'you shall be holy, for I, the Lord your G-d, is holy.'" The exact contents of this exalted demand, to be as holy as Hashem is unclear. Rashi, explains it is about being especially careful about all the forbidden relationships mentioned in last week's sedra of Acharei Mot. The Ramban sees it as a general demand that we must be careful about the permitted things the Torah allows us to do. i.e. Eat kosher food but don't become a glutton. Drink kosher wine, but don't be a drunkard, etc. Other commentators see it as a kind of explanation of what the 613 commandments in general are all about: 'The essential goal of performing Hashem's will to make as all 'holy'.

I would like to suggest that maybe this calling to becoming more righteous is connected more to the next verse: "A man must fear his mother and father, and keep my Shabbatim; I am the Lord your God." Within the Ten commandments we are instructed to Honour one's parents. The Rabbis understand honour in this context to mean loving and caring for one's parents; whereas the mitzvah here of fearing them is seen about showing respect and being obedient. The Torah knows that our first interaction with anyone, is going to be with our parents. How we bond and strengthen our relationships with them is a crucial building block towards expressing and emphasizing the importance of love, respect, and care of not only fearing and honouring one's parents but on the performance of all the other mitzvot too. In effect, the torah is laying the groundwork for creating a healthy personality, family life, and by extension, a vibrant community and society as a whole.

Shabbat, on the other hand, is principally more about our own personal covenant with Hashem, enhancing our belief that the world was and is governed by its Creator, who demands to be recognized of that fact. By refraining from work once a week, we are generating a time in which we all can not only refresh ourselves physically but will re-energize all of us spiritually too. It seems to me that the juxtaposition of these two laws, at the start of Kedoshim, imparts in us the basic elements of sanctity: a commitment to a healthy personal, familial relationship with the people around us on the one side and a G-d centered communal one on the other in order to show our commitment to Hashem, and to a world which we relate to as His creation.

Our Sages point out there needs to be a juxtaposition of fearing our parents and keeping Shabbat to indicate a possible tension and resolve a potential conflict between the two: They make it very clear that the verse, read properly, is teaching us the following: Yes! Fear your Mother and Father, but don't let that ever stop you from keeping my Sabbath. "I am Hashem". For example: If a parent asks you to break or desecrate the Shabbat, do not listen, as your commitment to me, Hashem trumps everything including the relationship you have with that parent.

Holiness can only be achieved by making a distinction between various commitments and needs. The responsibility relating to our parents, family and our close, personal circles, are vitally important and we should constantly work on making these relationships strong; but similarly, we also have an obligation to dedicate our time and efforts towards Hashem too. Harmonizing our personal needs and the eternal is the key to becoming 'Holy'. Favoring ones' sanctity towards Hashem and neglecting the people close to us will not actually make us so. May Hashem help us to maintain and keep the balance between these two factors in order to fulfil our duty of becoming 'Holy'.