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Practical Holiness
19: 1-37

When many people think of **Torah**, they think of **it** as "The Law!" Which, of course, has a negative connotation. "Don't break the law!" It sounds strict and unyielding. One reason for this is that many mistakenly understand **the Torah** to be a long list of "do's and don'ts." But **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** says: **How blessed are those who reject the advice of the wicked, don't stand in the way of sinners or sit where scoffers sit! Their delight is in ADONAI's Torah; on His Torah they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams – they bear their fruit in season, their leaves never wither, everything they do succeeds (Psalm 1:1-3).** The **Torah** (Hebrew: *teaching*) is our blueprint for living. However, **the Torah** portion before us is one which could certainly leave some with the impression that **it** is a boring manual of behavior, and a mere list of laws.

At first glance, this truly seems to be the case. I would remind you before we begin that the detailed instructions of **Leviticus 19** and **20** are varied and tedious because they represent **God's** important and specific instructions to the redeemed community. They concern how we are to walk and how we are to reflect the character of **God** in this world through **His** life. These teachings are not to be understood as a grocery list of human behaviors which, if obeyed, will earn one a place in heaven or a "better" standing with **the LORD** (**the Torah** was never meant as a means of salvation); or if disobeyed will result in one's eternity in hell.[318]

The diversity of material in this chapter reflects the diversity of life. All aspects of human affairs are subject to the commandments of **YHVH**. **The holiness** of **ADONAI** is the bedrock supporting the practical **holiness** promoted by these mitzvot. Though the specific rationale behind some of the commands may not be clear to the modern reader, the ethical commands of this chapter are not arbitrary but are based on the just, humane, and sensitive treatment of the aged, the handicapped, the poor, the resident alien, the laborer, and others. These mitzvot continually reach behind the outward behavior to inward motivation.[319]



Chapter 19 may be characterized as a brief **Torah** (teaching or instruction). It states the duties incumbent on **the Israelites** as **a people** and includes a wide range of commandments that are representative of the basic teachings of **the Torah**. More specifically, it echoes **the Ten Words** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy, to see link click Bk – The Ten Words**). **These features were noted by the ancient sages. In Leviticus Rabba 24, we read the following: Speak to the entire Israelite people and say to them "You shall be holy . . ." Rabbi Hiyya taught, "These words inform us that this section is to be read before the people in an assembly. And why is it to be read before the people in an assembly? Because most of the essential mitzvot of the Torah can be derived from it. Rabbi Levi said, "Because the Ten Words are embodied in it."**[320]

The basic principles of **the Ten Words** are incorporated into **Chapters 18** through **20**,
though not in the same order and not always with the same emphasis.

The Ten Commandments	**Leviticus**
1-2 No other gods	**18:2** and **19:4**
3 Misuse the Name	**19:12**
4 Observe Shabbat	**19:3b**
5 Honor father/mother	**19:3a**
6 Do not murder	**19:16b**

7 No adultery	**18:20** and **20:20**
8 Do not steal	**19:11a**
9 No false witness	**19:16a**
10 Do not covet	**19:18**