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Be Holy because ADONAI is Holy
19: 1-10

Be holy because ADONAI is holy DIG: Which three of the Ten Commandments are listed here? What does God expect from us? What is the purpose for each of the mitzvot? What is the motive for doing them and what is the means to be holy? What is sanctification?

REFLECT: How do you view your own holiness? Knowing yourself and your sins as you do, how is it possible for you to be holy? Do any of these mitzvot seem harsh to you? What does the harshness tell you about ADONAI's standard of holiness? What do you need to change?

Parashah 30: K'doshim (Holy Ones) 19:1 to 20:27

(See my commentary on Deuteronomy, to see link click Af – Parashah)

[In regular years read with Parashah 29, in leap years read separately]

The Key People are Moshe and the whole assembly.

The Scene is the Tabernacle in **the wilderness of Sinai**.

The Main Events include **ADONAI telling Moshe to say, "Be holy because I, ADONAI your God, am holy;" various mitzvot to keep the people holy; and a list of punishments for sin.**



In **his** first epistle, the apostle **Peter** urges **his** readers to be **holy**, quoting from the book of **Leviticus**. **Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Yeshua the Messiah. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You are to be holy because I am holy" (First Peter 1:13-16).** The construction: **be holy because I am holy** is found in **Leviticus 11:44**, referencing the dietary mitzvot, here, in **Leviticus 19:2**, referencing the **holiness** codes, and in **Leviticus 20:7**, referencing the mitzvot of sexual immorality. If **holiness** is to be understood as separateness, and **ADONAI** is proclaimed as **the Holy One** three times, is it not absurd for **Him** to challenge human beings to be as **holy** as **He** is **holy**? It seems quite unfair to give mankind a commandment we cannot hope to keep.

What can we do to achieve **holiness**? One might suppose that a great quest was in order. Some personal feat of prowess or achievement should be necessary to reach **holiness**. One might suppose that total subjugation of the flesh would be necessary to achieve **holiness**. One might suppose that complete withdrawal from the mundane world of human beings, living the solitary life of a monk, is necessary to achieve **holiness**. So, how does one become **holy**?

Basically, there is only one avenue to **holiness**, and that is through **sanctification**. To be **set apart**, specifically, to **the holy** use and purposes of **YHVH** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Kz – Your Word is Truth**). We see the principle at work from the very beginning of **Genesis** where **God** sets **the seventh**

day aside as **holy** (see the commentary on **Genesis Aq – By the Seventh Day God Had Finished His Work**). **The seventh day** itself possessed no intrinsic character of **holiness**. **It** was not more magnificent than the other six days, nor did **it** possess any exalted spiritual essence before **God** designated **it** as **holy**. **It** was made **holy** solely on the authority of **ADONAI**, and because **He** designated **it** as separate and **holy**, it is forever after **holy** and separate. In a similar way, we are **set apart** as **holy** unto **the LORD**.

But, here is the riddle. Normally, the thing to be made **holy** needs to be separated from its sanctifier. And **ADONAI** is the sanctifier. But **God** has chosen to have us participate in this process of **sanctification**, along with **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** who works **sanctification** in the life of the believer. This continual transformation of our moral and spiritual character actually comes to mirror the standing we already have in **God's** sight. While justification is instantaneous at the moment of salvation, **sanctification** is a lifelong process of making the person **holy**. However, the state of perfection is never reached in this life. It is a goal that is never reached. It is only when **the Lord** returns in glory, that **He** will unite us with our glorified bodies (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Dv – Our Resurrection Bodies**).

Holiness can be increased by obeying the commandments of **ADONAI . . .** and **it** can be decreased by disobeying those commandments. Picture the commandments to be like the walls of protecting the sheep pen. The shepherd places the sheep within the walls, thereby sanctifying them. They have clear boundaries, and they are set apart from the world outside. As long as the sheep stay within those walls, they remain **set apart**. Should they choose to cross the wall and stray outside, they have left the bounds of **holiness**. Should they choose to cross back over into the sheep pen, they return to the sanctified status that the shepherd designed for them. It is a commandment for us to **be holy.**[321] **We follow these commandments not to gain our salvation, but as our blueprint for living** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bk – The Ten Words**)**.**

Be holy because ADONAI, your God, is holy (9:1-2): ADONAI said to Moshe, "Speak to the entire community of Isra'el; tell them, 'You are to be holy because I, ADONAI your God, am holy' (19:1-2)." This is the topic sentence for the whole parashah. It tells us what **God** expects from us. It tells us the purpose for each of the specific mitzvot in this parashah. It tells us the motive for doing them, and it also tells us the means to be able to do them.

1. What God expects from us: What does **God** expect from the individual believer? In one word: **holiness**. **God's** definition of **holiness** is spelled out clearly in this parashah. It encompasses being totally set apart to **the Lord** in absolutely every area of our lives. Not even one aspect of our lives is held back from **Him** and uncovered. But I believe there is another dimension to **the holiness** spoken of in this **Torah** reading. In **20:32**, **God** reminded **Isra'el** that **He** did **not** want **them** to **live** like **the nations** around **them**. When they occupied the Promised Land, **Ha'Shem** did not want **Isra'el** to live like, worship like, think like, or look like the Canaanites. **The holiness** of **Isra'el** was defined by being in complete contrast with the Canaanites. **Isra'el** was to be radically different.

2. The purpose for each of the specific mitzvah: In light of the statements above, we are to view each of the mitzvot or teaching in this parashah as aids, or helps for us to live a separate life from the idolatrous and immoral Canaanites of our day. The meaning or interpretation of each command is to be considered in light of what it would contribute to **the holiness** of **Isra'el** then, or of ourselves today. In other words, when we consider living out these mitzvot, we need to ask ourselves, "How can I do this in such a way as to visibly communicate to those around me that matchless perfection of the **God** who instructed me to do this to begin with?"

3. The motive for doing them: When we read that **God** wants us to **be holy because He is holy**, we also learn the motivation for being **holy**; in other words, living out the teachings in **Leviticus**. The only revealed motive is that we are to do so only **because** our **God is holy**. We are to seek to be **imitators** of **Him** alone **(Ephesians 5:1)**, who called us out of the darkness into **His** marvelous light. We are not to do so to earn merit with **Him**. We are not to do so to earn **His** love. We already possess **His** love, and we rest totally on the merits of **His Son**, our **Messiah Yeshua**. We are to follow these mitzvot only because they reflect **Who** lives in us.

4. The means to being holy: There is a secret hidden in the words: **Be holy because ADONAI your God is holy.** If we understand the secret, we will be able to accomplish what these words are asking us to do. The first part of the secret is to understand that in and of ourselves we cannot be **holy**; we cannot live according to the standards set forth here.

The second part of the secret is to make sure that **ADONAI** is, in fact, **the**

Lord our **God**. If **Ha'Shem** is not our personal **God** then it is impossible for us to be like **Him**. **Yeshua** said that if we receive **Him** it is the same as receiving **the Father: If you have seen Me you have seen the Father (John 14:9b).** In other words, how does a person have **YHVH**, **the Creator** of the universe, as their personal **God**? By receiving **His Son**. When that happens, the Bible tells us that we are made into a new creation (see the commentary on **Second Corinthians Bd – A New Creation**). Our whole identity is changed from being a slave to sin, to someone who wants to live what **the Torah** teaches because **it** is **written on our hearts** (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Eo – I Will Make a New Covenant with the People of Isra'el**)! It is naturally a part of our character making us who we are . . . mirrors of **God's** righteousness on earth.

That, then, is the secret! We can only be **holy** if we have trusted in **Yeshua**. ***He***, then, transforms us into being **holy**, blameless, righteous and upright – just like ***He*** is! For us who are believers, reading this list of **holy** actions in this parashah is not a checklist of do's and don'ts (or you'll be zapped). It's like reading a description of what we really want to do from our innermost being to please our heavenly **Father** whom we love so much.[322]

Revering parents (19:3a): The fifth commandment in the Torah is: **Every one of you is to revere their father and mother** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bp – Honor Your Parents**)**.** If we are a people who **revere** our **fathers and mothers**, we have already separated ourselves from the majority of the population, especially in Western culture. At first, we might think that this commandment is the same as the command in **Exodus 10:12** where it says: **Honor your father and mother**. In that passage the word for **honor** is the Hebrew *kabeid*, the same word we sometimes translate as *glorify.* In this passage, however, the word translated as revere is the Hebrew *yara*, which means *fear*. We are to *fear* our **father and mother**.

Both these words are used regarding **YHVH** as well. We are to *glorify* **Him** and we are to *fear* **Him**. The way we treat our parents is not unrelated to our attitude about **God**. To understand the meaning of fearing our parents, we need only to consider the iconic, American rebellious teenager who speaks back to his parents, berating them, flaunting disobedience and throwing off their authority. The people of **God** are not like that. We are **holy**. We are different. Our teenagers are to be different, and we are to be different. This mitzvah is incumbent upon children and adults, and it refers to small behaviors as well as overall attitudes. Contradicting one's parents

in a disrespectful manner, interrupting their conversation, referring to them by their first names, speaking sarcastically or disrespectfully to them as if one were their peers are behaviors which demonstrate a lack of **reverence**.

Keeping the sabbaths (19:3b): **The fourth commandment** of **holiness** is **to keep the LORD's Shabbats; I am ADONAI your God** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bo – Observe Uom Shabbat**)**.** Notice that it does not say "Sabbath," instead it says **sabbaths**. This refers not just to the weekly sabbath, but to all **sabbaths** of the biblical festivals. In just a few chapters (see **Dw – God's Appointed Times**), **ADONAI** will list those sabbaths for us. For now, **He** simply says: **keep My sabbaths.** If we keep the Jewish biblical calendar with all of its festivals and **sabbaths**, we will certainly find ourselves **set apart** from others in our community. It is a mitzvah of **holiness**.

Notice how these first commandments of **holiness** are linked. *Fearing* one's **father and mother** is tied to **keeping the sabbaths** of **ADONAI**. This is to teach us that we must find a way to do both. If one's **father and mother** are not **sabbath keepers**, one must find a way to **keep the sabbaths** without disrespecting one's parents. This also teaches us that **keeping His sabbaths** is one way that we show proper **reverence** for our **Heavenly Father**.

Idols (19:4): These are the mitzvot of **holiness** which can also be seen in **the Fifth Book of Moses** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bl – Have No other Gods**). **Do not turn to idols, and do not cast metal gods for yourselves; I am ADONAI your God.** This was to set **Isra'el** apart from the other Gentile nations. The absence of polytheism and **idols** within the worship system of **the people of God** made **them** unique. How sad that within only a century or so after Christianity split off from Judaism, that **idolatry** crept back into the worship system. These commandments reveal **YHVH** in that they teach us **His** oneness, and they teach us **His** indescribable, transcendent nature. **He** cannot be reduced to an idolatrous representation, and **His** absoluteness cannot tolerate competing gods.

The Lord's Table (19:5-8a): **When you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to ADONAI, offer it in a way that will make you accept it. It is to be eaten the same day you offer it and the following day; but if any of it remains until the third day, it is to be burned up completely.** Here we learn to put sanctity ahead of pragmatism. To do so will set us apart because common sense dictates that we shouldn't waste the extra meat. **If any of it is eaten on the third day, it will have become a disgusting thing and will not be accepted;**

moreover, everyone who eats it will bear the consequences of profaning something holy meant for ADONAI. The command to burn up leftover meats reveals **God's** concern for life in **His** worship. **His holy** sacrifices are not to see **decay, "For You will not abandon my soul to sh'ol; nor will you allow your Holy One to undergo decay" (Psalm 16:10).**[323]

That person will be cut off from his people (19:8b). In rabbinic literature the penalty is called *karet*, or "cutting off." In priestly literature, the penalty of *karet* was understood to include a series of related punishments at the hand of God, ranging from the immediate death of an offender, as in 20:17, to his premature death at a later time, and even to the death of his descendants. In Mishnah Sanhedrin 9:6 and Mishnah Keritot 1:2, this penalty was characterized as *mitah biydei shamayim*, or "death at the hands of heaven." Since in 7:20-21 *karet* is mentioned in the context as childlessness, there is the implication that it took that course as well.[324]

The corners of the field (19:9-10): Caring for **the needy** is a mitzvah of **holiness**. **When you harvest the ripe crops produced in your land, don't harvest all the way to corners of your field, and don't gather the ears of grain left by the harvesters** (see the commentary on **Ruth Aq – Ruth Gleans in the Field of Bo'az**)**. Likewise, don't gather the grapes left on the vine or fallen on the ground after harvest; leave them for the poor and the foreigner; I am ADONAI your God.** The Torah addresses specifically the industry of agriculture within the land of **Isr'ael**, but the application of the principle is certainly broader. When reaping the field, **the corners** are to be left unharvested, and the gleanings are to be left uncollected. In vineyards (and orchards by extension) the harvesters are to be careful to leave fruit for **the poor**; fallen grapes are not to be gathered. The concept is that **the poor** and the needy might come in and harvest the gleanings and **the corners** for themselves. It is charity with dignity. Today, not harvesting **the** four **corners** of the field could be giving extra offerings, in being hospitable, praying for others, or calling a brother or sister in distress.

Do these mitzvot apply to other business ventures? Certainly. As we rely on **Ha'Shem** to prosper our endeavors, we must not forget those that rely on us. Interestingly, the mitzvah the commandment of leaving **the corners** and gleanings is one of the commandments for which there is no measure. This mitzvah of leaving extra food is completely contrary to good business in a manner that does not try to

squeeze every last drop of profitability out of its production is folly in the eyes of the world. One who does business in this manner will stand out as different. That's **holiness**.[325]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, How awesome that **You** are a **God** of love and **holiness**! Praise **You** that **Your** Kingdom in **Your** wonderful **holy** heaven will be a place of complete peace and joy. Perfect **holiness** is the key to heaven, bought by **Messiah's blood (Ephesians 1:5-7)** and received by our faith **in Him (Ephesians 1:12-13). You** are so gracious to have given **Your Holy Ruach** to those who love **You (John 1:12)** both as an inherited **seal for heaven (Ephesians 1:13)** and as an indwelling **Helper (John 14:16-17)** providing the strength we need to live **holy** lives and conquer temptations **(First Corinthians 10:13).***

*Thank **You** that we have the great joy of **Your Holy Ruach** living within believers to help us and to guide us. **I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper so He may be with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him. You know Him, because He abides with you and will be in you (John 14:16-17).** **You** gave so very much to become our sin bearer and give us **Your righteousness (Second Corinthians 5:21).** We delight in giving back to **You** a life full of loving thoughts and actions that please **You**. We cannot be completely **holy** till heaven, but we seek to live in **holy** ways because we keep our eyes fixed on **You** and eternity. Our trials will soon be over **(Romans 8:18).** We look with joy to bring **You** all the glory we can while we live on earth. Soon we will be coming home to be with **You** forever in heaven. We love **You**! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*