

Achare Mot-Kedoshim

אחרי מות-קדשים

Kedoshim: In Leviticus and Reform Judaism

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Exodus 19:3-6

שמות יט ג-ו

³ ויקרא אליו יהוה מן-ההר לאמר כה תאמר לבית יעקב ותגיד לבני ישראל: ⁴ אתם ראיתם אשר עשיתי למצרים ואשא אתכם על-כנפי נשרים ואבא אתכם אלי: ⁵ ועתה אם-שמוע תשמעו בקלי ושמרתם את-בריתי והייתם לי סגלה מכל-העמים כי-לי כל-הארץ: ⁶ ואתם תהיו-לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש אלה הדברים אשר תדבר אל-בני ישראל:

³ The Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel: ⁴ ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me. ⁵ Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep my covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, ⁶ but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

Leviticus 19:1-18

ויקרא יט א-יח

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.	וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: ² דבר אל-כל-עדת בני-ישראל ואמרת אלהם קדשים תהיו כי קדוש אני יהוה אלהיכם:
³ You shall each revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I the Lord am your God.	³ איש אמו ואביו תיראו ואת-שבתתי תשמרו אני יהוה אלהיכם:
⁴ Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves: I the Lord am your God.	⁴ אל-תפנו אל-האלילים ואלהי מסכה לא תעשו לכם אני יהוה אלהיכם:
⁵ When you sacrifice an offering of well-being to the Lord, sacrifice it so that it may be accepted on your behalf. ⁶ It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it, or on the day following; but what is left by the third day must be consumed by fire. ⁷ If it shall be eaten on the third day, it is an offensive thing, it will not be acceptable. ⁸ And he who eats of it shall bear his guilt, for he has profaned what is sacred to the Lord; that person shall be cut off from his kin.	⁵ וכי תזבחו זבח שלמים ליהוה לרצונכם תזבחהו: ⁶ ביום זבחכם יאכל וממחרת והנותר עד-יום השלישי באש ישרף: ⁷ ואם האכל יאכל ביום השלישי פגול הוא לא ירצה: ⁸ ואכליו עונו ישא כי-את-קדש יהוה חלל ונכרתה הנפש ההוא מעמיה:

<p>⁹When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Lord am your God.</p>	<p>⁹ובקצרכם את-קציר ארצכם לא תכלה פאת שדך לקצר ולקט קצירך לא תקלט: ¹⁰וכרמך לא תעולל ופרט כרמך לא תלקט לעני ולגר תעזב אתם אני יהוה אלהיכם:</p>
<p>¹¹You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another. ¹²You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord.</p>	<p>¹¹לא תגנבו ולא-תכחשו ולא-תשקרו איש בעמיתו: ¹²ולא-תשבועו בשמי לשקר וחללת את-שם אלהיך אני יהוה:</p>
<p>¹³You shall not defraud your fellow. You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning.</p>	<p>¹³לא-תעשק את-רעך ולא תגזל לא-תלין פעלת שכיר אתך עד-בקר:</p>
<p>¹⁴You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God: I am the Lord.</p>	<p>¹⁴לא-תקלל חרש ולפני עור לא תתן מכשל ויראת מאלהיך אני יהוה:</p>
<p>¹⁵You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your kinsman fairly. ¹⁶Do not deal basely with your countrymen. Do not profit by the blood of your fellow: I am the Lord.</p>	<p>¹⁵לא-תעשו עול במשפט לא-תשא פני-דל ולא תהדר פני גדול בצדק תשפט עמיתך: ¹⁶לא-תלך רכיל בעמיד לא תעמד על-דם רעך אני יהוה:</p>
<p>¹⁷You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt because of him. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the Lord.</p>	<p>¹⁷לא-תשנא את-אחיך בלבבך הוכח תוכיח את-עמיתך ולא-תשא עליו חטא: ¹⁸לא-תקם ולא-תטר את-בני עמך ואהבת לרעך כמוך אני יהוה:</p>

R. Yonatan Eibeschutz, *Tiferet Yonatan, Parashat Kedoshim*

In Nahmanides' Commentary on the *parashah* "You shall be holy" signifies "Sanctify yourself with what is permitted." However, as I have indicated, the call for further strictness can hardly be derived from the Torah text. We read in Josephus' book on the Romans that during the Second Temple there were people who withdrew to the woods where they lived as hermits restricting their nourishment to the fruit growing on trees and abstained from all worldly enterprise. The Sages, however, denounced such behavior. Indeed, those who worship God perfectly must in their conduct please both God and their fellow beings rather than renouncing the accepted social and civic norms, because widespread withdrawal undermines the natural order, ruins civilization and destroys the fabric of our nation.

Jon Levenson, Sinai and Zion: An Entry Into the Jewish Bible.

Another way of classifying Toraitic law is seen in the rabbinic tradition. The rabbis differentiated commandments that are *between man and his neighbor* from those *between man and God*. This classification is parallel to the modern distinction between casuistic and apodictic, although it is not identical, for an injunction such as the love of one's neighbor (Lev 19:18) is apodictic in form and yet it obviously affects one's life in society. What is interesting is that the rabbis did not view one class of commandments as more obligatory than the other, nor did they consider a person's obligation to his neighbor autonomous and independent of his duty to God. In other words, unlike some of the proponents

of liberal Judaism, the Talmudic rabbis did not distinguish between *ethical* and *ritual* norms with the goal of diminishing the latter. The two sets are equally obligatory. Where there emerges a conflict between a commandment of one set and one of the other, an order of priorities must be articulated. In that sense, one commandment may be more important than another, but not more obligatory. The prioritization is still an item in the law. Ordinarily, one does *all* the commandments. Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, the redactor of the Mishnah (ca. 200 C.E.), put it nicely: “Be as careful about a ‘light’ commandment as you are about a ‘serious’ one, for you do not know the reward of the commandments.” The commandments, then, are not an autonomous system of ethics which man devises for his own purposes.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity.

Jewish existence is not only the adherence to particular doctrines and observances but primarily the living *in* the spiritual order of the Jewish people, the living *in* the Jews of the past and *with* the Jews of the present. Not only is it a certain quality in the souls of the individuals but it is primarily involvement and participation in the covenant and community of Israel. It is more than an experience or a creed, more than the possession of psychic traits or the acceptance of theological doctrine; it is, above all, the living in a holy dimension, in a spiritual order. Our share in holiness we acquire by living in the Jewish community. What we do as individuals may be a trivial episode; what we attain as Israel causes us to grow in the infinite.

Since sanctity is associated with each [God, Israel and Torah], the question arises whether they are all on the same level of holiness, whether they form part of a hierarchy, or whether a dialectic relationship among them exists that is too subtle to be stated in a simple brief statement.

Because of the power and preciousness of [God, Torah and Israel], there is a tendency to extol and to overstate one at the expense of the other two.

CCAR Columbus Platform: 1937

Torah. ...Revelation is a continuous process, confined to no one group and to no one age. Yet the people of Israel, through its prophets and sages, achieved unique insight in the realm of religious truth. The Torah, both written and oral, enshrines Israel's ever-growing consciousness of God and of the moral law. It preserves the historical precedents, sanctions and norms of Jewish life, and seeks to mould it in the patterns of goodness and of holiness. Being products of historical processes, certain of its laws have lost their binding force with the passing of the conditions that called them forth. But as a depository of permanent spiritual ideals, the Torah remains the dynamic source of the life of Israel. Each age has the obligation to adapt the teachings of the Torah to its basic needs in consonance with the genius of Judaism.

Ethics and Religion. In Judaism religion and morality blend into an indissoluble unity. Seeking God means to strive after holiness, righteousness and goodness. The love of God is incomplete without the love of one's fellowmen.

The Religious Life. Judaism as a way of life requires in addition to its moral and spiritual demands, the preservation of the Sabbath, festivals and Holy Days, the retention and development of such customs, symbols and ceremonies as possess inspirational value, the cultivation of distinctive forms of religious art and music and the use of Hebrew, together with the vernacular, in our worship and instruction.

A Centenary Perspective: 1976

Our Religious Obligations: Religious Practice -- Judaism emphasizes action rather than creed as the primary expression of a religious life, the means by which we strive to achieve universal justice and peace. Reform Judaism shares this emphasis on duty and obligation. Our founders stressed that the Jew's

ethical responsibilities, personal and social, are enjoined by God. The past century has taught us that the claims made upon us may begin with our ethical obligations but they extend to many other aspects of Jewish living, including: creating a Jewish home centered on family devotion; lifelong study; private prayer and public worship; daily religious observance; keeping the Sabbath and the holy days; celebrating the major events of life; involvement with the synagogues and community; and other activities which promote the survival of the Jewish people and enhance its existence. Within each area of Jewish observance Reform Jews are called upon to confront the claims of Jewish tradition, however differently perceived, and to exercise their individual autonomy, choosing and creating on the basis of commitment and knowledge.

1999 Statement of Principles

We are committed to the ongoing study of the whole array of מצוות (*mitzvot*) and to the fulfillment of those that address us as individuals and as a community. Some of these מצוות (*mitzvot*), sacred obligations, have long been observed by Reform Jews; others, both ancient and modern, demand renewed attention as the result of the unique context of our own times.

We bring Torah into the world when we seek to sanctify the times and places of our lives through regular home and congregational observance. Shabbat calls us to bring the highest moral values to our daily labor and to culminate the workweek with קדושה (*kedushah*), holiness, מנוחה (*menuchah*), rest and ענג (*oneg*), joy. The High Holy Days call us to account for our deeds. The Festivals enable us to celebrate with joy our people's religious journey in the context of the changing seasons. The days of remembrance remind us of the tragedies and the triumphs that have shaped our people's historical experience both in ancient and modern times. And we mark the milestones of our personal journeys with traditional and creative rites that reveal the holiness in each stage of life.

We bring Torah into the world when we strive to fulfill the highest ethical mandates in our relationships with others and with all of God's creation. Partners with God in תיקון עולם (*tikkun olam*), repairing the world, we are called to help bring nearer the messianic age. We seek dialogue and joint action with people of other faiths in the hope that together we can bring peace, freedom and justice to our world. We are obligated to pursue צדקה (*zedek*), justice and righteousness, and to narrow the gap between the affluent and the poor, to act against discrimination and oppression, to pursue peace, to welcome the stranger, to protect the earth's biodiversity and natural resources, and to redeem those in physical, economic and spiritual bondage. In so doing, we reaffirm social action and social justice as a central prophetic focus of traditional Reform Jewish belief and practice. We affirm the מצוה (*mitzvah*) of צדקה (*zedakah*), setting aside portions of our earnings and our time to provide for those in need. These acts bring us closer to fulfilling the prophetic call to translate the words of Torah into the works of our hands.

A Torah Commentary for Our Times by Harvey J. Fields

While interpreted in a variety of ways, the words “You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy” have been a constant challenge to the Jewish people. In some ages they influenced Jews to separate themselves from other cultures and peoples. At other times they were understood as a reminder that the highest aim of Jewish living is to reach a “holiness” that reflects honor upon God, Torah, and the Jewish people. Today the ancient words continue to demand new interpretations and new standards that are defining what is *kadosh*, or “holy,” in Jewish tradition.