


Acharei-Kedoshim

Leviticus 16:1-20:27

Overview

- Following the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, G-d warns against unauthorized entry "into the holy." Only one person, the Kohen Gadol ("high priest"), may, but once a year, on Yom Kippur, enter the innermost chamber in the Sanctuary to offer the sacred ketoret to G-d.
- Another feature of the Day of Atonement service is the casting of lots over two goats to determine which should be offered to G-d and which should be dispatched to carry off the sins of Israel to the wilderness.
- The Parshah of Acharei also warns against bringing korbanot (animal or meal offerings) anywhere but in the Holy Temple, forbids the consumption of blood, and details the laws prohibiting incest and other deviant sexual relations.



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Overview

- The Parshah of Kedoshim begins with the statement: "You shall be holy, for I, the L-rd your G-d, am holy" followed by dozens of mitzvot (Divine commandments) through which the Jew sanctifies him or herself and relates to the holiness of G-d. These include: the prohibition against idolatry, the mitzvah of charity, the principle of equality before the law, Shabbat, sexual morality, honesty in business, honor and awe of one's parents, the sacredness of life.
- Also in Kedoshim is the dictum which the great sage Rabbi Akiva called a cardinal principle of Torah -- Love your fellow as yourself.

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- This week's Torah reading consists of two Parshiot -- Acharei Mot ("After the Death") and Kedoshim ("Holy Ones").
- Following the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, who "came close to G-d and died", G-d tells Moses to instruct Aaron
- ...that he should not enter, at all times, into the holy, inside the Parochet (the "veil" that separated the "Holy of Holies" from the rest of the Sanctuary), before the Kaporet (cover) that is upon the Ark--lest he die; for in a cloud I appear above the Kaporet...
- Only on the holiest day of the year--Yom Kippur--and after bringing a series of specially ordained offerings, should the Kohen Gadol ("high priest") purify himself, put on white linen garments, and enter the chamber housing the Ark:
- He shall take a pan-full of fiery coals from atop the altar that is before G-d, and the fill of his hands of finely-ground ketoret (incense), and bring them inside the Parochet.
- And he shall place the ketoret upon the fire before G-d; and the cloud of incense shall cover up the Kaporet that is on [the Ark of] the Testament...
- Our Parshah then goes on to detail the service performed by the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur to secure atonement for his people. Among the offerings of the day were two male goats:

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- And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats: one lot for G-d, and one lot for Azazel.
- The goat that which the lot determined to be "For G-d" is brought as an offering and its blood is sprinkled in the Holy of Holies. The one deemed for "Azazel" is "dispatched by the hand of an appointed man into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear upon it all their sins to a barren land."
- And he shall make atonement for the holy place, over the defilements of the children of Israel, over their transgressions in all their sins. And so shall he do for the Tent of Meeting, which dwells amongst them in the midst of their defilement...
- And this shall be an everlasting statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, the home born or the stranger that sojourns among you.
- For on this day will He will atone for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before G-d... once a year.
- The Parshah of Acharei also warns against bringing offerings to G-d anywhere but in the Holy Temple, forbids the consumption of blood, and details the laws prohibiting incest and other deviant sexual behaviors.

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- *After the death of the two sons of Aaron (Leviticus 16:1)*
- *Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria would explain this with a parable: A sick person was visited by a physician, who said to him: "Do not eat cold food and do not lie in the damp, lest you die." There then came a second physician who said to him: "Do not eat cold food and do not lie in the damp, lest you die as so-and-so died." The second one influences him more than the first. Thus it says: "After the death of the two sons of Aaron."*
- *(Rashi)*
- *Who came close to G-d and died (16:1)*
- *They approached the supernal light out of their great love of the Holy, and thereby died. Thus they died by "divine kiss" such as experienced by the perfectly righteous; it is only that the righteous die when the divine kiss approaches them, while they died by their approaching it... Although they sensed their own demise, this did not prevent them from drawing near to G-d in attachment, delight, delectability, fellowship, love, kiss and sweetness, to the point that their souls ceased from them.*
- *(Ohr HaChaim)*

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- *And he shall bathe his flesh in water, and clothe himself in them (16:4)*
- *On that day, the Kohen Gadol immersed (in a mikvah) five times, and washed his hands and feet from the kiyor ("basin") that stood before the Sanctuary ten times: each time he changed his clothes, he was required to immerse once, and wash twice (once before removing the first set of clothes, and again after dressing in the second set).*
- *For there were five sets of services performed by him on that day: 1) The regular morning services, performed in the "golden garments" (worn by the Kohen Gadol throughout the year). 2) The special services of the day (reciting the confession over the Yom Kippur offerings, casting the lots, entering the Holy of Holies to offer the ketoret and to sprinkle the blood of the Yom Kippur offerings)--performed in the linen garments. 3) The two rams brought as "ascending offerings" and the day's musaf offerings--in the golden garments. 4) returning to the Holy of Holies to remove the pan of burning incense--in linen garments. 5) the regular afternoon services--in the golden garments.*
- *(Talmud, tractate Yoma)*
- *Two he-goats (16:5)*
- *They should be identical in appearance, height and price, and should be acquired together.*
- *(Talmud, Yoma 62b)*
- *"For on this day, He shall atone for you (16:30)*
- *On Yom Kippur, the day itself atones... as it is written, For on this day... shall atone for you."*
- *(Maimonides)*

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- **Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: You shall be holy...** (Leviticus 19:2)
- **Rabbi Chiyya taught: This section was spoken in the presence of a gathering of the whole community, because most of the essential principles of the Torah are appended to it.**
- **Rabbi Levi said: Because the Ten Commandments are included therein:**
 - 1) "I am the L-rd your G-d," and here it is written, "I am the L-rd your G-d" (19:3, et al).
 - 2) "You shall have no other gods before me," and here it is written, "Nor make to yourselves molten gods" (19:4).
 - 3) "You shall not take the name of the L-rd your G-d in vain," and here it is written, "And you shall not swear by My name falsely" (19:12).
 - 4) "Remember the Sabbath day", and here it is written, "And keep My sabbaths" (19:3).
 - 5) "Honor your father and your mother," and here it is written, "Every man shall fear his mother and his father" (19:3).
 - 6) "You shall not murder," and here it is written, "You shall not stand by the blood of your fellow" (19:16).
 - 7) "You shall not commit adultery," and here it is written, "Both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death" (19:10).
 - 8) "You shall not steal," and here it is written, "You shall not steal, [neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another]" (19:11).
 - 9) "You shall not bear false witness," and here it is written, "You shall not go about as a talebearer" (19:16).
 - 10) "You shalt not covet... any thing that is your fellow's," and here it is written, "Love your fellow as yourself" (19:18).
- (Midrash Rabbah)

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- **Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: You shall be holy... (19:2)**
- **The easiest thing is to hide from the world and its follies, seclude oneself in a room, and be a holy hermit. What the Torah desires, however, is that a person should be part and parcel of "all the congregation of the children of Israel"--and be holy.**
- **(Alshich)**
- **You shall be holy (19:2)**
- **Sanctify yourself also regarding that which is permissible to you.**
- **(Talmud, Yevamot 20a)**
- **The meaning of this is that since the Torah has warned against forbidden sexual relations and forbidden foods, while permitting relations with one's wife and eating meat and wine, the lustful person can find a place to wallow in fornication with his wife or wives and be of "the guzzlers of wine and the gluttons of meat", and converse at will of all licentious things (since no prohibition against this is specified in the Torah). He can be a hedonist with the Torah's permission. Therefore, after enumerating the things which it forbids entirely, the Torah says: "Be holy." Constrain yourself also in that which is permitted.**
- **(Nachmanides)**

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- The Parshah of Kedoshim begins with G-d's statement to the people of Israel:
- You shall be holy, for I, G-d your G-d, am holy.
- G-d then proceeds to command numerous mitzvot, many of which are cardinal precepts of Torah law. E.g.,:
- Every man shall fear his mother and his father and keep my Sabbaths; I am G-d your G-d.
- Turn not to idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods; I am G-d your G-d...
- You shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.
- And you shall not swear by my name falsely; neither shall you profane the name of your G-d. I am G-d.
- You shall not defraud your neighbor, neither rob him; the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with you all night until the morning.
- Charity to the needy,
- When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleaning of your harvest... You shall leave them for the poor and stranger; I am G-d your G-d.
- and equality before the law,

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- You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment--you shall not give special consideration to a poor man, nor honor the great; in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.
- Also in our Parshah: the injunction not to "stand by your brother's blood" (i.e., the duty to "get involved" when another's life is threatened); the duty to "rebuke your fellow" over his wrongdoing rather than to "hate your brother in your heart"; prohibitions against slander and gossip, taking revenge and bearing a grudge.
- Kedoshim also contains the dictum which the great sage Rabbi Akiva called "a cardinal principle of Torah" and of which Hillel said, "This is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary":
- Love your fellow as yourself.
- In addition to these "mitzvot between man and man," there are "mitzvot between man and G-d" such as the chokim (supra-rational divine decrees) against hybrid cross-breeding of different animal species, hybrid planting of plant species, and shaatnez -- hybrid use of wool and linen in a garment.

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- Also,
- When you shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then you shall reckon their fruit as orlah ("uncircumcised"). Three years shall it be as orlah unto you: it shall not be eaten.
- The fourth year's produce is to be taken to Jerusalem, where it is eaten in sanctity; "its fruit shall be holy for praise-giving to G-d." Only "in the fifth year shall you eat of its fruit, that it may yield to you its increase."
- And,
- You shall not round the corners of [the hair of] your heads; neither shall you destroy the corners of your beard...
- Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot; lest the land fall to harlotry, and the land become full of foulness....
- You shall rise up before the white-haired, and honor the face of the old man, and fear your G-d; I am G-d.
- And if a stranger sojourn with you in your land, you shall not wrong him... and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am G-d your G-d.

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- A severe warning is issued for those who assume the practice of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan to sacrifice their children to the pagan god Molekh.
- Kedoshim concludes with a list of prohibitions against illicit sexual relations: adultery, various incestuous relationships (a father's wife, a daughter-in-law, an aunt, a sister, a sister-in-law, etc.), homosexuality, bestiality, relations with a menstruating woman.
- And you shall be holy to Me, for I, G-d, am holy, and I have separated you from the nations, that you should be Mine.

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- *The first dictum we heard from the Rebbe (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi) was: "What is forbidden, one must not; what is permitted, one need not."*
- *(Rabbi Mordechai of Horadok)*

- *Every man shall fear his mother and his father (19:3)*
- *And in Exodus 20:12 it says, "Honor your father and your mother." For it is revealed and known to G-d that a person adores his mother more than his father, and that he fears his father more than his mother. G-d therefore set the honor of one's father first, and the fear of one's mother first, to emphasize that one must honor and fear them both equally.*
- *(Talmud, Kiddushin 31a)*

- *Every man shall fear his mother and his father and keep my Sabbaths; I am G-d your G-d (19:3)*
- *Although I have commanded you to fear your father, if he tells you to violate the Shabbat--or to transgress any other mitzvah--do not heed him; for "I am G-d your G-d"--both you and your father are obligated to honor Me.*
- *(Rashi; Talmud)*

- *Turn not to idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods (19:4)*
- *At first, they will be just "idols"; but if you turn to them, you will end up making them "gods".*
- *(Rashi)*

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- *You shall not go about as a talebearer amongst your people; you shall not stand by your fellow's blood (19:16)*
- *Said Rabbi Yitzchak: One who bears tales is a murderer, as it is written: "You shall not go about as a talebearer amongst your people; you shall not stand by your fellow's blood"*
- *(Tosefta, Drech Eretz 6:3)*

- *Evil talk kills three people: the speaker, the listener, and the one who is spoken of.*
- *(Talmud, Erachin 15a)*

- *The speaker obviously commits a grave sin by speaking negatively of his fellow. The listener, too, is a partner to this evil. But why is the one who is spoken of affected by their deed? Are his negative traits worsened by the fact that they are spoken of?*
- *Indeed they are. A person may possess an evil trait or tendency, but his quintessential goodness, intrinsic to every soul, strives to control it, conquer it, and ultimately eradicate its negative expressions and redirect it as a positive force. But when this evil is spoken of, it is made that much more manifest and real. By speaking negatively of the person's trait or deed, the evilspeakers are, in effect, defining it as such; with their words, they grant substance and validity to its negative potential.*
- *But the same applies in the reverse: speaking favorably of another, accentuating his or her positive side, will aid him to realize himself in the manner that you have defined him.*
- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

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- *The Psalmist compares slanderous talk to "Sharp arrows of the warrior, coals of broom" (Psalms 120:4). All other weapons smite from close quarters, while the arrow smites from the distance. So is it with slander: it is spoken in Rome and kills in Syria. All other coals, when extinguished, are extinguished without and within; but coals of broom are still burning within when they are extinguished without. So is it with words of slander: even after it seems that their effects have been put out, they continue to smolder within those who heard them. It once happened that a broom tree was set on fire and it burned eighteen months--winter, summer and winter.*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*
- *Evil talk is like an arrow. A person who unsheathes a sword can regret his intention and return it to its sheath. But the arrow cannot be retrieved.*
- *(Midrash Tehillim)*
- *To what may the tongue be compared? To a dog tied with an iron chain and locked in a room within a room within a room, yet when he barks the entire populace is terrified of him. Imagine if he were loose outside! So the tongue: it is secured behind the teeth and behind the lips, yet it does no end of damage. Imagine if it were outside!*
- *(Yalkut Shimoni)*

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- *Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov once instructed several of his disciples to embark on a journey. The Chassidic leader did not tell them where to go, nor did they ask; they allowed Divine Providence to direct their wagon where it may, confident that the destination and purpose of their trip would be revealed in due time.*
- *After traveling for several hours, they stopped at a wayside inn to eat and rest. Now the Baal Shem Tov's disciples were pious Jews who insisted on the highest standards of kashrut; when they learned that their host planned to serve them meat in their meal, they asked to see the shochet (ritual slaughterer) of the house, interrogated him as to his knowledge and piety and examined his knife for any possible blemishes. Their discussion of the kashrut standard of the food continued throughout the meal, as they inquired after the source of every ingredient in each dish set before them.*
- *As they spoke and ate, a voice emerged from behind the oven, where an old beggar was resting amidst his bundles. "Dear Jews," it called out, "are you as careful with what comes out of your mouth as you are with what enters into it?"*
- *The party of Chassidim concluded their meal in silence, climbed onto their wagon and turned it back toward Mezhibuzh. They now understood the purpose for which their Rebbe had dispatched them on their journey that morning.*
- *You shall not go about as a talebearer (19:16)*
- *A man once came to see Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch and proceeded to portray himself as a villain of the worst sort. After describing at length his moral and spiritual deficiencies, he begged the Rebbe to help him overcome his evil character.*
- *"Surely," said the Rebbe, "you know how grave is the sin of lashon harah, speaking ill of a human being. Nowhere, to my knowledge, does it say that it is permissible to speak lashon harah about oneself."*

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- *You shall not stand by your fellow's blood (19:16)*
- *From where do we know that if one sees his fellow drowning in a river, being dragged off by a wild animal or attacked by robbers, that one is obligated to save him? From the verse, "You shall not stand by your fellow's blood."*
- *(Talmud, Sanhedrin 73a)*

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- **You shall not hate your brother in your heart; rebuke, rebuke your fellow, but do not incur a sin on his account (19:17)**
- **If a person is wronged by another, he should not hate him and remain silent, as is said in regard to the wicked, "And Absalom did not speak to Amnon, neither good nor evil, for Absalom hated Amnon" (II Samuel 13:22). Rather, it is a mitzvah for him to make this known to him, and say to him, "Why did you do this-and-this to me? Why did you offend me in this way?", as it is written: "Rebuke, rebuke your fellow." And if that person expresses regret and asks him for forgiveness, he should forgive him...**
- **One who sees that his fellow has sinned, or is following an improper path, it is a mitzvah to bring him back to the proper path and to inform him that he sins by his bad actions, as it is written: "Rebuke, rebuke your fellow."**
- **When one rebukes one's fellow, whether it is regarding matters between the two of them or regarding matters between that person and G-d, he should rebuke him in private. He should speak to him gently and softly, and should tell him that he is doing this for his own good, so that he may merit the World to Come.**
- **If that person accepts [the rebuke], good; if not, he should rebuke him a second time and a third time. He should continue to rebuke him to the point that the sinner strikes him and says to him, "I refuse to listen."**
- **Whoever has the ability to rebuke and does not do so shares in the guilt for the sin, since he could have prevented it...**
- **One who is wronged by his fellow but does not desire to rebuke him or speak to him about it at all because the offender is a very coarse person, or a disturbed person, but chooses instead to forgive him in his heart, bearing him no grudge nor rebuking him, this is the manner of the pious. The Torah's objection [to remaining silent] is only when he harbors animosity.**
- **(Mishneh Torah, Laws of Character, ch. 6)**

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- ***Rebuke, rebuke your fellow (19:17)***
- ***Our sages have said: "Words that come from the heart, enter the heart." It therefore follows that if you seek to correct a failing of your fellow and are unsuccessful, the fault lies not with him, but with yourself. Had you truly been sincere, your words would certainly have had an effect.***
- ***(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)***
- ***Rebuke, rebuke your fellow (19:17)***
- ***Why is the word "rebuke" repeated? Because first you must rebuke yourself.***
- ***(The Chassidic Masters)***
- ***Your fellow is your mirror. If your own face is clean, the image you perceive will also be flawless. But should you look upon your fellow man and see a blemish, it is your own imperfection that you are encountering -- you are being shown what it is that you must correct within yourself.***
- ***(Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)***

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- *Rebuke, rebuke your fellow (19:17)*
- *On one occasion, Rabbi Aaron of Belz was informed that one of the town's residents had desecrated the Shabbat. He immediately ordered both the informer and the Shabbat violator to appear before him.*
- *"I order you to donate two pounds of candles to the synagogue," said Rabbi Aaron to the informer, "in order to atone for the fact that you spoke negatively of a fellow Jew."*
- *"And you," said the Rebbe to the second man, "I fine one pound of candles, for being the cause of your fellow Jews speaking negatively of another Jew."*
- *Rebuke, rebuke your fellow (19:17)*
- *Said Rabbi Ilaah in the name of Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon: Just as it is a mitzvah for a person to say what will be accepted, it is a mitzvah to refrain from saying things that will not be accepted.*
- *Rabbi Abba said: Indeed, it is an obligation [to act thus], as it is written (Proverbs 9:8): "Do not rebuke a fool, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you."*
- *(Talmud, Yevamot 65b)*

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- *You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge (19:18)*
- *What is revenge and what is bearing a grudge? If a person said to his fellow, "Lend me your sickle," and he replied "No", and on the following day the second person comes to the first and says, "Lend me your ax," and he replies: "I will not lend it to you, just as you would not lend me your sickle"--that is revenge.*
- *And what is bearing a grudge? If one person says to his fellow, "Lend me your ax," and he replies, "No", and on the morrow the second asks, "Lend me your garment," and the first answers: "Here it is. I am not like you who would not lend me"--that is bearing a grudge.*
- *(Talmud, Yoma 23a)*
- *You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against any of your people; and you shall love your fellow as yourself (19:18)*
- *How does one avoid acting vengefully? One should think: If a person were cutting meat and the knife cut his hand, would that hand cut the first hand in return?*
- *(Jerusalem Talmud, Nedarim 9:4)*
- *Love your fellow as yourself (19:18)*
- *Rabbi Akiva said: This is a cardinal principle of the Torah.*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*
- *A gentile came before Shammai and said to him, "I wish to convert to Judaism, on the condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot." Shammai drove him away with the builder's cubit which was in his hand. When he came before Hillel, Hillel said to him: "What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor. This is the entire Torah; the rest is the commentary--go and learn it."*
- *(Talmud, Shabbat 31a)*

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- *Why did Hillel say that this is "the entire Torah"? Granted that it is the essence of all mitzvot governing our behavior "between man and man"; but the Torah also includes many mitzvot that are in the realm of "between man and G-d." In what way is the mitzvah to "Love your fellow as yourself" the essence of mitzvot such as praying, or ceasing work on Shabbat?*
- *The explanation can be found in the answer to another question: How is it possible to love another "as yourself"? Are not self and fellow two distinct entities, so that however closely they may be bound, the other will always be other, and never wholly as the self?*
- *As physical beings, one's self and one's fellow are indeed two distinct entities. As spiritual beings, however, they are ultimately one, for all souls are of a single essence, united in their source in G-d. As long as one regards the physical self as the true "I" and the soul as something this I "has", one will never truly love the other "as oneself." But if the soul is the "I" and the body but its tool and extension, one can come to recognize that "self" and "fellow" are but two expressions of a singular essence, so that all that one desires for oneself, one equally desires for one's fellow.*
- *Otherwise stated, the endeavor to love one's fellow as oneself is the endeavor to cultivate one's own spiritual identity; to see the soul and spirit as the true and ultimate reality, and the body and the material as extraneous and subservient to it.*
- *This is the entire Torah.*
- *(Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)*

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- *Love your fellow as yourself (19:18)*
- *A soul might descend to earth and live seventy or eighty years for the sole purpose of doing a favor for another--a spiritual favor, or even a material favor.*
- *(Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)*

- *When two people meet, something positive must result for a third.*
- *(Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch)*


- *Love your fellow as yourself (19:18)*
- *Love of a fellow is the first gate leading into the palace of G-d.*
- *To love a fellow is to love G-d. For "You are children unto the Lord your G-d" (Deuteronomy 14:1); one who loves a father loves his children.*
- *"Love your fellow as yourself" is an elaboration and elucidation upon "And you shall love the L-rd your G-d" (Deuteronomy 6:5). When one loves one's fellow one loves G-d, for one's fellow contains within himself a "part of G-d above" (Job 31:2). By loving one's fellow, the innermost part of him, one loves G-d.*
- *(Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)*

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- *The three loves--love of G-d, love of Torah and love of one's fellow--are one. One cannot differentiate between them, for they are of a single essence. And since they are of a single essence, each one embodies all three.*
- *So if you see a person who has a love of G-d but lacks a love of Torah and a love of his fellow, you must tell him that his love of G-d is incomplete. And if you see a person who has only a love for his fellow, you must strive to bring him to a love of Torah and a love of G-d--that his love toward his fellows should not only be expressed in providing bread for the hungry and water for the thirsty, but also to bring them close to Torah and to G-d.*
- *When we will have the three loves together, we will achieve the Redemption. For just as this last Exile was caused by a lack of brotherly love, so shall the final and immediate Redemption be achieved by love for one's fellow.*
- *(From the words spoken by the Lubavitcher Rebbe immediately following his formal acceptance of the leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch in 1951)*
- *Love your fellow as yourself (19:18)*
- *One must love the lowliest of men as much as the greatest Torah scholar.*
- *(Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)*

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- *Three great Chassidic leaders were famous for their ahavat yisrael ("love of a fellow Jew"): Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, and Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli.*
- *Rabbi Zusha was a living example of the maxim that "Love covers up all iniquities" (Proverbs 10:12). What the ordinary observer would perceive as a glaring deficiency, or even an outright sin, would not "register" in his holy eyes and mind. Rabbi Zusha was simply incapable of seeing anything negative in a fellow Jew*
- *Rabbi Levi Yitzchaks ahavat yisrael found expression in his incessant efforts as an advocate for the people of Israel. Unlike Rabbi Zusha, he was not blind to their misdeeds and failings; but he never failed to "judge every man to the side of merit" to find a justification, and even a positive aspect, in their behavior. (A typical story tells of how, upon noticing a wagon driver who was greasing his wheels while reciting his morning prayers, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak lifted his eyes to Heaven and cried: "Master of the Universe! Behold the piety of Your children! Even as they go about their daily affairs, they do not cease to pray to You!")*
- *But the Baal Shem Tov's love ran deeper yet. To him, ahavat yisrael was not the refusal to see the deficiencies of a fellow, or even the endeavor to transform them into merits, but an unequivocal love regardless of their spiritual state. He loved the most iniquitous transgressor with the same boundless love with which he loved the greatest tzaddik; he loved them as G-d loves them as a father loves his children, regardless of who and what they are.*
- *Love your fellow as yourself (19:18)*
- *I learned the meaning of love from two drunks whose conversation I once overheard.*
- *The first drunk said: "I love you."*
- *"No you dont," replied the other.*
- *"Yes, yes, I do. I love you with all my heart."*
- *"No you dont. If you love me, why dont you know what hurts me?"*
- *(Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev)*



Acharei-Kedoshim
Leviticus 16:1-20:27

- *Love your fellow as yourself (19:18)*
- *Our sages have said: "Do not judge your fellow until you have stood in his place" (Ethics of the Fathers 2:4). Since the only person in whose place you can truly stand is yourself, this means that you are qualified to judge only yourself.*
- *Regarding yourself, you must condemn your moral and spiritual failings and be critical of your every achievement. Regarding your fellow, however, you must employ a double standard: your love and esteem toward him should be amplified by every positive quality you see in him, and should not to be affected in the least by any seemingly negative things you might observe.*
- *(Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)*
- *When I was four years old, I asked my father: "Why did G-d make people with two eyes? Why not with one eye, just as we have been given a single nose and a single mouth?"*
- *Said father: "There are things upon which one must look with a right eye, with affection and empathy; and there are things upon which one must look with a left eye--severely and critically. On one's fellow man, one should look with a right eye; on oneself, one should look with a left eye."*
- *(Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch)*
- *Love your fellow as yourself (19:18)*
- *The Torah commands to "Love your fellow as yourself." Why only as much as yourself?*
- *Indeed, Chassidim have always maintained that the meaning of the verse is the very opposite of how it is commonly understood. Despite all that you know about yourself, the Torah is saying, you should try to love yourself as much as you love your fellow...*
- *(Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch)*

Acharei-Kedoshim Leviticus 16:1-20:27

- **Fruits**
- ***When you shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food... Three years shall it be "orlah" unto you: it shall not be eaten. On the fourth year, all its fruit shall be holy for praise giving to G-d. And in the fifth year shall you eat of its fruit, that it may yield to you its increase... (19:23-25)***
- ***Thus the fruit tree passes through all three basic Halachic (Torah-legal) states: the forbidden, the sanctified, and the permissible.***
- ***The fruit tree can therefore be seen as representative of the whole of creation, which likewise is divided among these three categories. There are, for example, foods that are forbidden to us (e.g., pork, meat with milk); foods whose consumption is a mitzvah---an act that sanctifies the food, elevating it as an object of the divine will (such as matzah on the seder night); and foods that are spiritually "neutral"--eating them is neither a transgression nor a sanctifying act. The same applies to clothes (the forbidden shaatnez; the mitzvah of tzitzit; and ordinary clothes); speech (gossip and slander; the holy talk of prayer and Torah study; talk of everyday matters); sexuality (adultery and incest; the mitzvah to "be fruitful and multiply"; ordinary marital life); money (thievery; charity; legal business dealings); and to every other area of life.***
- ***Otherwise stated: there are elements of our experience and environment that G-d commands us to reject and disavow; elements that we are empowered to sanctify by directly involving them in our relationship with G-d; and finally, there are elements which, even as they serve as the "supporting cast" for our fulfillment of G-d's will (e.g. the food that provides us with the energy to pray), remain ordinary and mundane.***

Acharei-Kedoshim
Leviticus 16:1-20:27

- **Fruits**

- ***In light of this, would it not have been more appropriate for the three stages of the fruit tree to follow an order of increasing sanctity--i.e., the forbidden, followed by the permissible, and culminating in the holy? Instead, the Torah legislates three forbidden years, followed by a year in which the fruit is sacred and its consumption a mitzvah, after which the fruit becomes ordinary food! Even more surprising is the fact that the fruit of the fifth year is presented as the product and goal of the first four: for three years you shall abstain from a tree's fruit, says the Torah, and on the fourth year you shall sanctify it, so that on the fifth year, "it may yield to you its increase." Keep from transgression and sanctify the holy so that you should have a lot of ordinary fruit to eat!***
- ***In truth, however, the ultimate purpose of our lives lies in the realm of the "ordinary". Only a small percentage of the world's leather is made into tefillin; only a small part of a community's man-hours can be devoted to prayer and Torah-study. The greater part of our lives falls under the "spiritually neutral" category: elements that, even as they serve a life that is predicated on a commitment to the divine will, remain ordinary and mundane components of a material existence; elements whose positive function does not touch them deeply enough to impart to them the "holiness" that spells a manifest and tagible attachment to the Divine. But it is in this area that we most serve G-d's desire for "a dwelling place in the lowly realms"-- that the ordinary landscape of material life should be made hospitable to His presence. asnd subservient to His will.***
- **(The Chassidic Masters)**

Acharei-Kedoshim
Leviticus 16:1-20:27

- *You shall rise before the white-haired, and honor the face of the old man (19:32)*
- *The Rabbis taught: I might think, even before an aged sinner; but the Torah uses the word zakein ("old man"), which refers to a sage... to one who has acquired wisdom...*
- *But Issi ben Yehudah said: "You shall rise before the white-haired" implies any hoary head.*
- *Said Rabbi Yochanan: The law follows Issi ben Yehudah. Rabbi Yochanan used to rise before the heathen aged, saying: "How many experiences have passed over these!"*
- *(Talmud, Kiddushin 32b-33a)*

Acharei-Kedoshim
Leviticus 16:1-20:27

- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*
- *The Torah considers old age a virtue and a blessing. It instructs to respect all elderly, regardless of their scholarship and piety, because the many trials and experiences that each additional year of life brings yield a wisdom which the most accomplished young prodigy cannot equal.*
- *This is in marked contrast to the prevalent attitude in the "developed" countries of today's world, where old age is a liability. Youth is seen as the highest credential in every field from business to government, as a younger generation insists on "learning from their own mistakes" rather than building upon the life experience of their elders. At 50, a person is considered "over the hill" and is already receiving hints that his position would be better filled by someone twenty-five years his junior; in many companies and institutions, retirement is mandatory by age 65 or earlier.*
- *Thus society dictates that one's later years be marked by inactivity and decline. The aged are made to feel that they are useless if not a burden, and had best confine themselves to retirement villages and nursing homes. After decades of achievement, their knowledge and talent are suddenly worthless; after decades of contributing to society, they are suddenly undeserving recipients, grateful for every time the younger generation takes off from work and play to drop by for a half-hour chat and the requisite Fathers Day necktie.*

Acharei-Kedoshim
Leviticus 16:1-20:27

- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*
- *On the surface, the modern-day attitude seems at least partly justified. Is it not a fact that a person physically weakens as he advances in years? True, the inactivity of retirement has been shown to be a key factor in the deterioration of the elderly; but is it still not an inescapable fact of nature that the body of a 70-year-old is not the body of a 20-year-old?*
- *But this, precisely, is the point: is a persons worth to be measured by his physical prowess? By the number of man-hours and inter-continental flights that can be extracted from him per week? Our attitude toward the aged reflects our very conception of "value." If a persons physical strength has waned while his sagacity and insight have grown, do we view this as an improvement or a decline? If a persons output has diminished in quantity but has increased in quality, has his net worth risen or fallen?*
- *Indeed, a twenty-year-old can dance the night away while his grandmother tires after a few minutes. But man was not created to dance for hours on end. Man was created to make life on earth purer, brighter and holier than it was before he came on the scene. Seen in this light, the spiritual maturity of the aged more than compensates for their lessened physical strength.*

Acharei-Kedoshim
Leviticus 16:1-20:27

- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*
- *Certainly, the physical health of the body affects ones productivity. Life is a marriage of body and soul, and is at its most productive when nurtured by a sound physique as well as a healthy spirit. But the effects of the aging process upon a persons productivity are largely determined by the manner in which he regards this marriage and partnership. Which is the means and which is the end? If the soul is nothing more than an engine to drive the bodys procurement of its needs and aims, then the bodys physical weakening with age brings with it a spiritual deterioration as well---a descent into boredom, futility and despair. But when one regards the body as an accessory to the soul, the very opposite is the case: the spiritual growth of old age invigorates the body, enabling one to lead a productive existence for as long as the Almighty grants one the gift of life.*

Amos 9:7-15.

- *Amos 9:7-15.*
- This week's *haftorah* foretells the exiles and punishments that will befall the Jews because they strayed after the ways of the heathens -- behavior that this week's Torah reading proscribes.
- The prophet Amos delivers G-d's message, reminding the people of G-d's kindness to them -- taking them out of Egypt and singling them out as His chosen nation. Nevertheless, because of their misdeeds, G-d will destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel; but will not completely destroy the house of Jacob. The Jews will be scattered amongst the nations, but eventually they will return to their land -- on the day of the redemption. G-d will then reinstall the House of David to its former glory and there shall be peace and abundance upon the land.
- The *haftorah* ends with G-d's promise: "And I will return the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild desolate cities and inhabit [them], and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their produce. And I will plant them on their land, and they shall no longer be uprooted from upon their land, that I have given them, said the L-rd your G-d."

RABBI BEREL WEIN

- The old Jewish bon mot is that acharei mot – after the death of a person - then kedoshim - the person is suddenly remembered only as being noble and holy. This attitude stems directly from the ancient Jewish tradition not to speak ill of those that have passed on. Naturally we are all aware that not everyone is deserving of the glowing eulogy bestowed upon the deceased but nevertheless Jewish protocol holds sway in these matters.
- The Shulchan Aruch explicitly allows "some exaggeration" in the funeral orations over a deceased person. The measure of "some exaggeration" is purposely left vague and undefined and the good judgment of the eulogizer in the matter is encouraged. My father, of blessed memory, told me that once when he was a rabbi in Chicago, a noted Jewish mobster died. The family of the gangster was affiliated with the synagogue where my father served as rabbi and they insisted that my father eulogize their mobster relative at the funeral service.
- In order to guarantee that there would be a respectable turnout of people at the funeral chapel for the service, the family engaged the services of a very famous cantor to sing the memorial prayers. They posted notices in the neighborhood about this cantor's funeral-concert and naturally a large crowd turned out for the event. My poor father who was hard pressed to be able to say anything positive about the deceased finally declared in his necessarily brief eulogy: "The man must have done many good deeds and favors privately that we are unaware of, for look at the large crowd that has come here to the funeral chapel to pay him their last respects!"

RABBI BEREL WEIN

- The Torah itself confirms this attitude and behavior towards the dead. The two sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, whose deaths are the subject of the first verse of the parsha of this week, were described in the Torah as causing their own deaths by "offering up a strange fire [of incense]" upon G-d's altar. The rabbis of the Talmud noted other failings in these two sons of Aharon - they refused to marry, they were intoxicated when entering the holy precincts of the Mishap, they had a rebellious attitude towards their elders, Moshe and Aharon, among other failings.
- Yet we find that in discussing the matter with his bereaved brother Aharon, Moshe tells him that this is what G-d must have meant, so to speak, when He told Moshe b'krovai akadesh - through the death of those who are nearest and dearest to Heaven will G-d's name be sanctified in the world. The Torah after pointing out their sin of the "strange fire" nevertheless continues to describe the deceased as krovai - My nearest and beloved ones.
- From this it is apparent that we are not to dwell upon the faults and shortcomings of others, certainly not after their deaths. Judgment is G-d's province and muckraking people after they are gone is not within Jewish tradition. The prohibition of lashon hara - negative bad speech - applies to speaking about the dead as well as the living.

**All of what we are, we see, we did and will do, is the
Work of HaShem.**

**“May it be Your Will, HaShem, that the Holy Temple be
rebuilt speedily in our days and grant us our share
in Your Torah....”**

Shabbat Shalom