

Parashat K'doshim - 'Holy ones' (Leviticus 19:1-20:27)

Parashat K'doshim is named for a word in the second verse:

**Vayedaber HaShem el-Moshe lemor:
Daber el-kol-adat b'nei-Yisrael v'amarta alehem k'doshim tihyu ki kadosh ani
HaShem elokeichem:**

**And HaShem spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the
children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy [ones], for I HaShem your
G-d am holy."
Leviticus 19:1-2**

Let's look at that stunning command again:

...You shall be holy [ones], for I HaShem your G-d am holy.

Leviticus 19:2

There is a profound misunderstanding of the biblical word "holy" among some believers. Because G-d Himself is holy, we often equate holiness with sinlessness. Although G-d is most certainly sinless, "holy" does not mean to be sinless in and of itself. Holiness is not a moral state, but it is to be **and to act** "other than."

Much of the Torah contains instructions for determining *k'dosh* from *chol* [holy from common]. These instructions were designed to teach us to be able to tell the difference. It is no wonder then, that a people who out of hand dismiss a huge part of G-d's Holy Word do not understand what the word "holy" means.

G-d is distinct and separate from man, and He wants His people to resemble Him in what we **do**. It is interesting that Peter quotes this command in 1Peter 1:15-16:

...He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'

1Peter 1:15-16

Where is the "it is written" reference that Peter is quoting from? There are three places where G-d tells His people that He wants them to **act** holy. The three passages are all in the book of Leviticus:

- Leviticus 11:44
- Leviticus 19:2
- Leviticus 20:7

Notice the context:

- Leviticus 11:44 (your diet)

- Leviticus 19:2 (revere mother/father and keep G-d's Sabbaths)
- Leviticus 20:7 (maintain sexual purity)

What do all of these three places have in common? Well, to be fair most modern commentators would say, "nothing" - since the only parts of G-d's instructions they believe are valid for us today have to do with things that *don't look too "Jewish."* The moment you mention "Sabbaths" (the plural is speaking of the weekly Sabbath and the yearly Sabbath "feasts" outlined in Leviticus 23), or diet, many "Christians" start looking for the theological exits. How odd, because if you begin to understand the word "holy" [*kadosh*] you will begin to understand why some Bible things look "Jewish."

The word *kadosh* [holy] is a word that denotes someone or something not looking or acting "the same." G-d is *other-than* mankind. He is separate and distinct. This is what theologians like to call G-d's **transcendence**. In our study of Scripture we discover that the reason for the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle] was so that G-d could dwell with man. This *dwelling* with man theologians refer to this as G-d's **immanence**. There is a very real problem that the *Mish'kan* illustrates: How can a holy G-d dwell among common men? The answer is repeated throughout the Torah: to approach G-d (in His holiness), men and women must leave the common behind.

When G-d commands us to be holy, He is telling us to *act like He does*. This week's parasha is a primary source for the Master's "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 5-7. G-d's people are to look and act differently from the rest of the world. Now, for some of us that is not too difficult (I am often seen as "odd"), but it is not enough to merely be different from the world - it is to be different *in the way that G-d Himself has defined*. G-d declared that He was holy - He wants His people not only to be different than those around them - He wants them to *resemble Him*.

Now, back to those Bible things that "look Jewish" - maybe 1,900 years of "church" anti-Semitism has clouded our minds. If in your mind, G-d's standards of holiness look "Jewish" maybe you are confused about exactly Who your Master is. Is he the Sabbath-breaking, Pharisee-kicking, Temple-destroying, blond-haired, blue-eyed "messiah" in many people's minds - or is He the Torah-observant, spotless Lamb of G-d Who will one day rule the world from His throne in His capitol city Jerusalem?

As for looking "Jewish" by what I wear, what I eat, where I go, what I do, and when I worship, then so be it. Those are **Bible** things - and by the way, my Master is Jewish, and it is my duty to imitate Him.

Haftarot Acharei Mot & K'doshim - (Amos 9:7-15; Ezk 20:2-20)

This week has two half-portions from the Torah again, and also from the Prophets. The Torah portions and found in Leviticus 16:1-20:27. These Torah portions are the heart of the Torah. They are physically found half way through the Torah, and they contain the "love thy neighbor chapters" of Leviticus. Additionally, they outline the call to holiness that is so often quoted in the Apostolic Scriptures. Do you want to know the definition of love for your brother? Concentrate on these chapters. Do you want to know the definition of holiness? Concentrate on these chapters.

Our haftarot deal with a common subject: the failure of national Israel to measure up to the holiness standard - and the faithfulness of HaShem to still keep us as His people. It is about

grace, beloved, **grace**. G-d keeps His promises! He is not a respecter of persons... but He is a respecter of His promises. Look at the obvious contrast:

Behold, the eyes of Ad-nai HaShem are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," says HaShem.

Amos 9:8

He uses the covenant Name (*Ad-nai HaShem*). That means this is not by merit, but by His guarantee to Abraham and the fathers. Truly, Israel will suffer. Many have and many will die... but the Almighty keeps His word to Israel. We are His, eternally.

It does not stop there. Here is the mystery. It is not Israel alone that is Israel. He has others that Israel has drawn to Him. They too are His people. They too receive His calling. They too are called to love one another. They too are called to be His holy ones. This is the passage that Ya'akov, our Master's half-brother quotes in Acts 15:16-17 when remarking about the mystery of Gentiles being a part of the Assembly of Israel.

On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My Name.

Amos 9:11-12

"*Gentiles who are called by My Name*"? Wow! Gentiles who are called to be holy, and to thereby sanctify the Name of the Holy One, blessed is He? This is a true revelation and one that the Apostle Paul draws heavily from. It is thereby remarkable that these passages are tied by the Sages to this week's Torah portions. Specifically, portions that detail commandments regarding Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement] and the "love thy neighbor" commands. Jew and Gentile. One in Messiah. *Echad* in Messiah.