

Acharei Mot_K'Doshim - 27

Acharei Mot

Torah: Leviticus 16:1 - 18:30

Haftarah: Amos 9:7-15; Ezekiel 22:1-16

BC/NT: I Corinthians 6:9-20

Normally, we begin our study of each parashah by starting with the Torah reading and then including the Haftarah and the Brit Chadassah readings as appropriate to learning how to apply the commandments (mitzvot), statutes (chuqqim), and judgments (mishpatim) to our daily lives as we learn to walk in the Torah while in the Diaspora. But we will begin with the Haftarah readings because they tie together Torah and Brit Chadassah brilliantly and eloquently and give us much to ponder. There are two readings for the Haftarah from the prophets Amos and Ezekiel. We will begin with Ezekiel.

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, *2 “And you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then inform her of all her abominations. Ezekiel 22:1-2*

This is the correct standard of judgment. We are to judge according to the Torah, by the commandments (mitzvot), statutes (chuqqim), and judgments (mishpatim). In the Torah, we learn what YHVH considers abominations. As Yeshua warned,

“Do not judge, so that you will not be judged. 2 For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and look, the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye! Matthew 7:1-5

If we heed Yeshua’s warning, we should take the logs out of our own eyes first. The list provided in Ezekiel 22 is an excellent place to start.

The first two abominations listed by Ezekiel are “shedding blood” and “making idols”. That caused Jerusalem to be judged and be made a “reproach to the nations” and a “mocking to all the lands”.

3 And you shall say, ‘This is what the Lord God says: “A city shedding blood in her midst, so that her time is coming; and a city that makes idols, contrary to her own good, for defilement! 4 You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and you have become defiled by your idols which you have made. So you have brought your days closer and have come to your years; therefore I have made you a disgrace to the nations, and an object of mocking to all the lands. 5 Those who are near and those who are far from you will make fun of you, you of ill repute, full of turmoil. Ezekiel 22:3-5

The prohibition against shedding blood goes all the way back to Genesis 9:4-6.

4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 5 I certainly will require your lifeblood; from every animal I will require it. And from every person, from every man as his brother I will require the life of a person.

*6 Whoever sheds human blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,
For in the image of God
He made mankind.*

The prohibition against making idols is one of the Ten Commandments.

4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them nor serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, inflicting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. Exodus 20:4-6

Verse 7 lists three abominations.

7 They have treated father and mother lightly within you. The alien they have oppressed in your midst; they have oppressed the fatherless and the widow among you. Ezekiel 22:7

Treating one’s father and mother lightly transgresses the command to “honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be prolonged on the land which the Lord your God gives you” (Exodus 20:12).

Oppressing aliens violates the direct command “[y]ou shall not oppress a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” Exodus 22:21

Oppressing the fatherless and widow violates the next statute in Exodus 22.

***22** You shall not oppress any widow or orphan. **23** If you oppress him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will assuredly hear his cry; **24** and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. Exodus 22:22-24*

The above are more general violations of the statutes of the covenant. The highlighted transgressions listed in Ezekiel 22:9-11 are violations of Leviticus 18 which is part of the Torah reading for this parashah.

In your midst they have committed acts of lewdness. Ezekiel 22:9c

An example of lewdness is given in Leviticus 18:17. Lewdness is the Hebrew word ‘zimmah’ H2154 which is also translated as wickedness.

***17** You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; they are blood relatives. It is lewdness. Leviticus 18:17*

***10** Among you they have uncovered their fathers' nakedness; among you they have abused her who was unclean in her menstruation. Ezekiel 22:10*

There are two transgressions given in Ezekiel 22:10. The first is uncovering their fathers' nakedness which is prohibited in Leviticus 18:7-8 for either one's own mother or one's father's wife, whether stepmother or plural wife.

***7** You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, that is, the nakedness of your mother. She is your mother; you are not to uncover her nakedness. **8** You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness. Leviticus 18:7-8*

The other offense is laying with a woman unclean due to menstruation. That is prohibited in Leviticus 18:19.

***19** Also you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness during her menstrual impurity. Leviticus 18:19*

Three more offenses are listed in Ezekiel 22:11. In this verse, adultery and two forms of incest are charged.

And one has committed abomination with his neighbor's wife, another has outrageously defiled his daughter-in-law, and another among you has sexually abused his sister, his father's daughter. Ezekiel 22:11

Adultery is prohibited in Leviticus 18 wherever a wife is mentioned. The primary verse prohibiting adultery is Leviticus 18:20. Other verses that mention wife are 18:7-8, 14-16.

***20** And you shall not have sexual intercourse with your neighbor's wife, to be defiled with her. Leviticus 18:20*

The last four offenses listed by YHVH before He renders judgment are given in Ezekiel 22:12.

***12** In you they have taken bribes to shed blood; you have taken interest and profits, and you have injured your neighbors for gain by oppression, and you have forgotten Me," declares the Lord God. Ezekiel 22:12*

Taking a bribe to cause injury to the innocent was cursed on Mount Ebal by the people just after they crossed into the Promised Land.

***25** 'Cursed is he who accepts a bribe to strike down an innocent person.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' Deuteronomy 27:25*

Taking interest and injuring your neighbor by oppression for gain is forbidden in at least two places. Leviticus 25:38 also includes the reminder that YHVH is our Elohim so these three charges are all included in Leviticus 25:35-38 and reinforced by Deuteronomy 23:19-20.

***35** 'Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, so that he may live with you. **36** Do not take usurious interest from him, but revere your God, so that your countryman may live with you. **37** You shall not give him your silver at interest, nor your*

food for gain. **38** *I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God. Leviticus 25:35-38*

19 *"You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned on interest. **20** You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess. Deuteronomy 23:19-20*

For all of these offenses and many more, the sentence given for punishment was exile.

15 *And I shall scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the lands, and I will consume your uncleanness from you. Ezekiel 22:15*

Other than death or being cut off, exile was the most severe punishment and comes at the end of a series of chastening discipline intended to get our fathers' attention as described in Leviticus 26.

33 *You, however, I will scatter among the nations, and I will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste. Leviticus 26:33*

This concludes our discussion of the first Haftarah reading and we now turn to the second one which is Amos 9:7-15. For the present study, we are interested in verses 9-12 because verse 9-10 connects with Ezekiel 22:15 and verses 11-12 were cited by James in his decision recorded in Acts chapter 15.

9 *"For behold, I am commanding,
And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations
As grain is shaken in a sieve,
But not a kernel will fall to the ground.
10 All the sinners of My people will die by the sword,
Those who say, 'The calamity will not overtake or confront us.'
11 "In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David,
And wall up its breaches;
I will also raise up its ruins
And rebuild it as in the days of old;
12 So that they may possess the remnant of Edom
And all the nations who are called by My name,"
Declares the Lord who does this. Amos 9:-12*

Amos provides hooks, if you will, that we can use to make connections with Acharei Mot. As already mentioned, James cited Amos in Acts 15:13-21. We'll now look at that one, and then look at another connection with respect to "days of old".

13 After they stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 And with this, the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written:

*16 'After these things I will return,
And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen,
And I will rebuild its ruins,
And I will restore it,*

*17 In order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,
And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,'*

18 Says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.

19 Therefore, it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled, and from blood. 21 For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." Acts 15:13-21

Acts 15:20 lists "things contaminated by idols", "from what is strangled", and from blood". These are referenced in Acharei Mot by Leviticus 17:7 for idols, and Leviticus 17:10, 13-14 for prohibiting what is strangled and consuming blood. The prohibition against fornication, or sexual immorality, is in multiple verses in both Leviticus chapter 18 (Acharei Mot) and chapter 20 (K'doshim).

Now that we have laid the foundation to see why the portion known as Acharei Mot is so important, we can go back to the Torah reading for this portion.

In Leviticus chapter 16, there are two topics covered.

The first topic is to describe the steps of the ritual of Yom Kippur which is the holiest and most sacred of the Feasts of the Lord God. For the common Israelite, which is anyone not an Aaronic priest or Levite, we do not do anything, especially no work and we afflict our souls while the high priest performs this ritual. Ultimately, we understand that we can not rid ourselves of sin. But Yeshua, son of the Eternal Father, can through his death and resurrection!!!

The second topic is that of washings which may partially underlie the foundational doctrine of washings listed in Hebrews 6:2.

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and about the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Hebrews 6:1-2

In this portion, Acharei Mot, there are five references to washings. Leviticus 17:15-16 is the one most akin to what we understand as baptism and the purpose of baptism to wash and make us clean.

*4 He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and the linen undergarments shall be next to his body, and he shall be wrapped about the waist with the linen sash and the linen turban wound around his forehead (these are holy garments). **He shall bathe his body in water** and put them on. Leviticus 16:4*

*24 And **he shall bathe his body with water** in a holy place and put on his clothes, and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people. Leviticus 16:24*

26 The one who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body with water; then afterward he shall come into the camp. Leviticus 16:26

28 Then the one who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body with water; and afterward he shall come into the camp. Leviticus 16:28

*15 And any person who eats an animal which dies or is torn by animals, whether he is a native or a stranger, **shall wash his clothes and bathe in water**, and remain unclean until evening; then he will become clean. 16 But if **he does not wash his clothes and bathe his body, then he shall bear the responsibility for his guilt.**" Leviticus 17:15-16*

Take note of the fact that D. Thomas Lancaster of FFOZ in his book "Elementary Principles: Six Foundational Principles of Ancient Jewish Christianity" argues that what Hebrews 6:2 is referring to is the ancient *Didache*.

Based on the evidence in the *Didache*, we can deduce that the term "instruction about washings" refers to the period of instruction and the contents of that instruction that a new initiate into the school of Jesus' disciples underwent prior to immersion into Jesus' name. Lancaster, p. 69

Proceeding to the next chapter, Leviticus chapter 17, there are four verses which should be highlighted as being the source for James' ruling in the great Acts 15 council regarding how former Gentiles could be integrated into the believing Jewish community.

7 And they shall no longer offer their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the prostitute. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations.” Leviticus 17:7

***10** ‘And anyone from the house of Israel, or from the strangers who reside among them, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats the blood, and will cut him off from among his people. **11** For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.’ **12** Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, ‘No person among you may eat blood, nor may any stranger who resides among you eat blood.’ **13** So when anyone from the sons of Israel, or from the strangers who reside among them, while hunting catches an animal or a bird which may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dirt.*

***14** “For as for the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, ‘You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.’ Leviticus 17:10-14*

From the above passage, verses 10, 12 and 14 clearly prohibit the consumption of blood, while verse 13 is the basis for the prohibition against eating things strangled cited in Acts 15:20.

Acts 15:20 also prohibits fornication, or in newer translations, sexual immorality. To this we now turn as we consider Leviticus chapter 18.

Leviticus chapter 18 provides a very extensive list of prohibited sexual immoralities that James collectively called fornication. Let's take a moment to consider the structure of this chapter. Verses 1-5 provide a header or an introduction to the material while a footer or conclusion is given in verses 26-30. Everything in between is fornication or sexual immorality. Now, this is not all at the physical outward level. Verse 21 shows that fornication can also be spiritual, as in idolatry, as we'll see when we get to it.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘I am the Lord your God. 3 You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes. 4 You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God. 5 So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, which, if a person follows them, then he will live by them; I am the Lord. Leviticus 18:1-5

A quick DuckDuckGo search on “ancient Egypt marriage customs” showed that the ancient Egyptian had customs that YHVH warned against in Leviticus 18.

The first “hit” introduced the topic with the following paragraph, although the rest of the [article](#) is well worth the read.

Although some aspects of marriage in ancient Egypt were similar to those of today, others were radically different, and other aspects remain hazy. As in today's society, Egyptians considered marriage to be for a lifetime but divorces were fairly common. Incest was frowned upon except for royalty, who could marry their siblings, and marriages were expected to be monogamous, except for royalty.

Right off the bat, we see divorces, incest, expected monogamy. The rest of the linked article above sounds like modern-day feminism and romance in ancient Egypt.

A [second article](#) had this to say about how the ancient Egyptians viewed marriage.

Monogamy was emphasized as a value even among the stories of the gods and male gods usually had only one female wife or consort but the king was allowed to have as many wives as he could support, as could any royal man of means, and this most likely influenced how male infidelity was perceived. Still, the ideal of the ancient Egyptian relationship was a couple who remained faithful to each other and produced children.

With this in mind, we can consider what YHVH had to say. In Leviticus 18:3, He clearly says that He doesn't want His people to do marriage the way the Egyptians were doing it, and one of the things the Egyptians did was discourage polygyny with exceptions for wealthy royalty. Even Egyptian gods practiced

monogamy according to the second article. Incest is a no-no as well, and most of chapter 18 lists family members with whom sex would be incest. Divorce is not discussed in this chapter and Moses doesn't address divorce until Deuteronomy chapter 24.

Incest is prohibited. Uncovering nakedness is the Hebrew idiom for lying with someone.

6 'None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness; I am the Lord. Leviticus 18:6

Verses 7-15 define what constitutes a "blood relative" for purposes of prohibiting incest.

7 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, that is, the nakedness of your mother. She is your mother; you are not to uncover her nakedness. 8 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness. 9 As for the nakedness of your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether born in the household or born outside the household, you shall not uncover their nakedness. 10 The nakedness of your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter, their nakedness you shall not uncover; for their nakedness is yours. 11 The nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, born to your father, she is your sister; you shall not uncover her nakedness. 12 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is your father's blood relative. 13 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is your mother's blood relative. 14 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother. You shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt. 15 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; you shall not uncover her nakedness. Leviticus 18:7-15

Verses 7-8 prohibit uncovering the nakedness of your father's wife. That could be your own mother, or step-mother if your mother died and your father remarried, or your father's plural wife that he's married to at the same time he's married to your mother.

Leviticus 18:9 and 11 prohibits sexual relations with any category of your sister. This is why some argue that Sarai may well have been Abram's dead brother Haran's daughter, Iscah, renamed to Sarai and later Sarah. Note that nieces are not prohibited.

Grand-daughters are prohibited per Leviticus 18:10.

Different categories of aunts are prohibited by Leviticus 18:12-14.

Daughters-in-law are also prohibited by Leviticus 18:15.

16 *You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness. Leviticus 18:16*

There is an exception to taking your brother's wife and that is if your brother died without a male child. Levirate marriage is described in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

17 *You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; they are blood relatives. It is lewdness. Leviticus 18:17*

Here, lewdness is the Hebrew זִמְמָה 'zimmah' H#2154. Zimmah is defined as “a *plan*, especially a bad one: - heinous crime, lewd (-ly, -ness), mischief, purpose, thought, wicked (device, mind, -ness).”

Please note that in verse 17, taking two women is not forbidden, but taking a woman and her daughter or her granddaughter is forbidden. This leads to realizing that taking two sisters at the same time is not forbidden if the conditions are satisfied. Let's look at this.

18 *Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time. Leviticus 18:18 KJV*

The KJV renders this verse more accurately than most other versions which inject the translators' monogamy-only bias. Note several things about this verse:

1. Lewdness is not used as in verse 17
2. To vex her is the key condition.

If the man's intention is to vex his first wife, that's forbidden and he has to wait until his first wife is dead before taking her sister. Otherwise, it's allowed. The loving relationship between sisters should be preserved.

The most famous example of a man taking two sisters is Jacob who contracted to take Rachel as his wife. But her father deceived him and gave him Leah first. Jacob did not divorce Leah but contracted again to marry Rachel. Jacob refused to cheapen Leah in any manner or disrespect her. He had to learn to love her, though, and, in time, he did. He buried Leah next to his parents and he himself was buried next to her. Rachel died because she was cursed by Jacob for stealing her father's teraphim though he did not know about it at the time.

Now, if what Jacob had done was wrong, YHVH would never have allowed him to bring his wives back to the Land from Padan-Aram. If Jacob was wrong to marry two sisters, he would have defiled himself and defiled the Land, and be barred entry according to Leviticus 18:24-25.

24 'Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these things the nations which I am driving out from you have become defiled. 25 For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has vomited out its inhabitants. Leviticus 18:24-25

Therefore, if you are going to take more than one wife, follow the rules. Don't take a woman and her daughter or granddaughter, and don't marry your wife's sister to vex your wife.

Don't have sexual relations with your wife while she is impure due to menstruation. This is called *niddah* in Judaism.

19 'Also you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness during her menstrual impurity. Leviticus 18:19

This is adultery. See also Deuteronomy 22:22-24 Also, the references to the wives of various male relatives listed above also constitute adultery.

20 And you shall not have sexual intercourse with your neighbor's wife, to be defiled with her. Leviticus 18:20

In a section discussing sexual sin, this seems odd and out of place. But this makes fornication and adultery a spiritual sin because giving worship to an elohim other than YHVH is spiritual fornication and adultery.

***21** You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the Lord. Leviticus 18:21*

Someone who is part of the community of Israel is bound by the Mosaic covenant to worship YHVH and YHVH alone, and no other elohim, nor is he to make an idol and bow down and worship it. Giving sacrifice to Molech is profaning His Name, and what makes it worse, if you give your seed to Molech, you are destroying your seed and your descendants. YHVH did stop the sacrifice of Isaac. Molech gladly accepts the death of our children. In this connection, abortion is a terrible form of idolatry.

Male homosexuality is explicitly forbidden.

***22** You shall not sleep with a male as one sleeps with a female; it is an abomination. Leviticus 18:22*

Both males and females are prohibited from coupling with beasts.

***23** Also you shall not have sexual intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion. Leviticus 18:23*

Verse 23 concludes the list of sexual prohibitions and the conclusion to the chapter follows.

***24** 'Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these things the nations which I am casting out from you have become defiled. **25** For the land has become defiled, therefore I have visited its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants. **26** But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the alien who resides among you **27** (for the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled), **28** so that the land may not spew you out should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you. **29** For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people. **30** Thus you are to keep My charge that you do not practice*

any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so that you do not defile yourselves with them; I am the Lord your God.” Leviticus 18:24-30

Compare the above with Deuteronomy 21:10-17 and 22:22-30.

Also consider the first four terms of the works of the flesh that Paul enumerated in Galatians chapter 5. Like James at the Acts 15 council, Paul drew on Leviticus chapters 16-20 when he compiled his famous list of the works of the flesh.

19 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness Galatians 5:19 KJV*

To conclude Acharei Mot, Paul gets the last word.

9 *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,*

10 *Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

11 *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

12 *All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*

13 *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.*

14 *And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.*

15 *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.*

16 *What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.*

17 *But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.*

18 *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.*

19 *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

20 *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. I Corinthians 6:9-20 KJV*

K'doshim

Torah: Leviticus 19:1 - 20:27

Haftarah: Ezekiel 20:2-20; Amos 9:7-15

BC/NT: Matthew 5:43-48

The name of this parashah, K'doshim, is taken from the command “you shall be holy”.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

2 “Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. Leviticus 19:1-2

If we are to be holy like Him, then it follows that we should look and act like Him.

As such, Paul wrote to the Romans that we are to become conformed to the image of His Son.

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters Romans 8:28-29

K'doshim, then, is a guide to walking in holiness. In fact, Leviticus 19 refers to many clauses in the Sinai covenant of Exodus 20:1- 24:8 and we will see these connections as we go through the chapter. Ultimately, if Leviticus 19 refers back multiple times to the Sinai Covenant, that covenant is what guides our daily walk or halacha. The references to the Sinai Covenant that follow will be italicized for easier reading.

3 Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and you shall keep My Sabbaths; I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:3

8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 For six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; on it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male slave or your female slave, or your cattle, or your resident who stays with you. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; for that reason the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

12 *"Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be prolonged on the land which the Lord your God gives you. Exodus 20:8-12*

4 Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves cast metal gods; I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:4

4 *"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them nor serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, inflicting the punishment of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing favor to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. Exodus 20:4-6*

9 'Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:9-10

15 *When she got up to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. 16 Also you are to purposely slip out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it so that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."*

17 *So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.*

23 *So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law. Ruth 2:15-17,23*

11 'You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. Leviticus 19:11

15 *"You shall not steal.*

16 *"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. Exodus 20:15-16*

12 And you shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:12

7 *"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. Exodus 20:7*

13 'You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired worker are not to remain with you all night until morning. Leviticus 19:13

21 “You shall not oppress a stranger nor torment him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. **22** You shall not oppress any widow or orphan. **23** If you oppress him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will assuredly hear his cry; **24** and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

25 “If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. **26** If you ever seize your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, **27** for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else is he to sleep in? And it will come about that when he cries out to Me, I will listen to him, for I am gracious. Exodus 22:21-27

14 You shall not curse a person who is deaf, nor put a stumbling block before a person who is blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:14

The present author is himself deaf with a deaf wife, and they know other deaf, blind, and deaf-blind people, so this gracious provision causes them to truly love their dearest Lord. Extending this to people with all kinds of physical and mental disabilities isn’t a big stretch.

15 ‘You shall not do injustice in judgment; you shall not show partiality to the poor nor give preference to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly. Leviticus 19:15

This applies more to the judges of the people as well as the rulers of tens, fifties, hundreds and thousands. To the person who says that Yeshua doesn’t want us to judge, consider Leviticus 19:15 in light of Yeshua’s comments.

*“Do not judge, so that you will not be judged. **2** For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. **3** Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? **4** Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and look, the log is in your own eye? **5** You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye! Matthew 7:1-4*

16 You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people; and you are not to jeopardize the life of your neighbor. I am the Lord.

17 ‘You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may certainly rebuke your neighbor, but you are not to incur sin because of him. **18 You shall not take vengeance, nor hold any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:16-18**

These three verses conclude with the great commandment that Yeshua said was second only to the greatest commandment which was to love YHVH with all your heart, soul and might.

35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him: 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 37 And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 Upon these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:35-40

This section really deals with the heart level that Yeshua expounded in His great Sermon on the Mount. In fact, rebuking one’s neighbor in love is certainly permitted. Therefore, judging must be done in love.

19 ‘You are to keep My statutes. You shall not cross-breed two kinds of your cattle; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear a garment of two kinds of material mixed together. Leviticus 19:19

Our lives must be lives of purity, not mixing. If we take the command, we are to keep **His** statutes as the primary point of this verse, then we can make the connection that we should not mix the statutes of the nations with His statutes and pollute them thereby. We do not mix that which is holy with that which is profane, or that which is unclean with what is clean.

In the above verse, animal husbandry, agriculture and clothing are all subjects where mixing is not allowed. We don’t mix clean food with that which is not clean. In marriage, we do not profane it by committing adultery nor fornication. Nor do we allow male homosexuality nor bestiality for both males and females. All this flows from keeping His statutes.

20 ‘Now if a man has sexual relations with a woman who is a slave acquired for another man, but who has in no way been redeemed nor given her freedom, there shall be punishment; they shall not, however, be put to death, because she was not free. 21 He shall bring his guilt offering to the Lord to the doorway of the tent of meeting, a ram as a guilt offering. 22 The priest shall also make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the Lord for his sin which he has committed, and the sin which he has committed will be forgiven him. Leviticus 19:20-22

In part, this refers back to the Sinai Covenant, especially Exodus 21:7-8.

7 "Now if a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she is not to go free as the male slaves do. 8 If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He does not have authority to sell her to a foreign people, because of his unfairness to her. 9 And if he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. 10 If he takes to himself another woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights. 11 But if he will not do these three things for her, then she shall go free for nothing, without payment of money. Exodus 21:7-11.

Whether a female is slave or free does have an effect on the penalty assessed for a sexual crime. The female slave belonged to another man and she was not free to be sexually involved with a man other than her master.

23 'Now when you enter the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as forbidden. For three years it shall be forbidden to you; it shall not be eaten. 24 And in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, an offering of praise to the Lord. 25 But in the fifth year you shall eat its fruit, so that its yield may increase for you; I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:23-25

This is an agricultural statute, primarily geared to those who would plant trees with fruit, such as olive trees. Looking deeper into this, this statute teaches us patience, and in year four, giving YHVH the fruit as an offering of praise, and finally, in year 5, the farmer can eat the fruit. This is a statute governing the order of planting and harvesting.

It also can apply to new converts to Yeshua. We should not rush to make new converts leaders or teachers immediately. Let them grow and mature first and then after a few cycles of Torah, they can serve the body if they are ready.

26 'You shall not eat any meat with the blood. You shall not practice divination nor soothsaying. Leviticus 19:26.

This goes back to Leviticus 17:10 which was discussed earlier for Acharei Mot.

27 You shall not round off the hairline of your heads, nor trim the edges of your beard. Leviticus 19:27

The Hebrew word H5362 translated as “round” is נָקַף *nâqaph naw-kaf* and the definition given is [a] primitive root; to *strike* with more or less violence (*beat, fell, corrode*); by implication (of attack) to *knock together*, that is, *surround* or *circulate*: - compass (about, -ing), cut down, destroy, go round (about), inclose, round.

The rather extensive word study for this says about *nâqap*: A verb meaning to strike off, to strip away. It occurs twice in the Hebrew Bible. It is used passively in Isa 10:34 where it referred to the stripping away the forest thicket, describing God's destruction of Lebanon with an ax. In Job 19:26, the word is employed figuratively to describe the effects of his disease on his skin.

Harm or trim is H7843. The Hebrew word is שָׁחַח *shâchath* which is defined as [a] primitive root; to *decay*, that is, (causatively) *ruin* (literally or figuratively): - batter, cast off, corrupt (-er, thing), destroy (-er, -uction), lose, mar, perish, spill, spoiler, X utterly, waste (-r).

The corresponding word study for H7843 is verb meaning to spoil, to ruin, to destroy, to pervert, to corrupt, to become corrupt, to wipe out. The verb is used to denote the action(s) of the world (i.e., it is corrupt) and ultimately the reason for God's flooding it (Gen 6:11-12). However, even in total destruction meant to punish the evil of humans, God was sure to save a remnant and therefore keep His part of the covenant. This idea of a saved remnant is predominant throughout the rest of the Old Testament.

Another usage of the verb depicts disobedience to God's command to be fruitful and multiply by spoiling or wasting semen on the ground (Gen 38:9). In this case, Onan's disobedience led to his death, for what he did was wicked in the eyes of Yahweh. The verb is also used to describe violating the covenant in terms of being corrupt (Mal 2:8). As Lot looked over the valley of the Jordan, this word was used to depict what would happen to Sodom and Gomorrah in a future time because of their wickedness (Gen 13:10). In the context of the plagues, the smearing of blood on the lintels and doorposts protected Israel from the destruction of their firstborn (Exo 12:23). When the destroyer came, he would pass by those who had blood on the lintels and doorposts of their houses. Jerusalem was saved from destruction in 2 Samuel when the Lord was grieved due to the calamity of His people (2Sa 24:16). This verb is used to denote the destruction of a slave's eye that allowed him to go free (Exo 21:26). In

Deuteronomy, God prohibited the destruction of fruit trees, for their fruit could be eaten (Deu 20:19-20). He commanded this, for the trees were for the benefit of humans. He also prohibited the shaving (i.e., in terms of spoiling, destroying) of one's beard (Lev 19:27).

Considering these two words' meanings and word studies, perhaps the simplest meaning is to not shave one's head bald nor to shave one's beard unless following specific commandments that require shaving. In other words, the default is not shaving one's head nor beard. But the present author has seen different interpretations of this verse as it applies to men. It's vague enough that the only advice that can be given to men is that each of you be a noble Berean, study, and then walk out your decision. This is likely one of those things that Yeshua will need to clarify in the Millennial Kingdom in the author's opinion.

28 You shall not make any cuts in your body for the dead, nor make any tattoo marks on yourselves: I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:28

Our western mourning customs do not require us to cut our bodies for the dead so this one should be easy. Some argue that Leviticus 19:27 and 28 go together to proscribe pagan mourning rituals and that may indeed be the case.

Tattooing is more widespread and that is harder for some to keep. Since our bodies are temples for the Holy Spirit we are to glorify Him, and Paul makes this clear.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought for a price: therefore glorify God in your body. I Corinthians 6:19-20

Don't tattoo your bodies, or if you have, don't add to what you already have.

29 'Do not profane your daughter by making her a harlot, so that the land does not fall into harlotry, and the land does not become full of lewdness. Leviticus 19:29

Lewdness was defined in Acharei Mot and is the Hebrew זִמָּה 'zimmah' H#2154. Zimmah is defined as "a *plan*, especially a bad one: - heinous crime, lewd (-ly, -ness), mischief, purpose, thought, wicked (device, mind, -ness)."

It is critical that the daughters of Israel be cared for and not cast off into harlotry or prostitution in more modern language. As the physical goes, so goes the

spiritual condition of the people. By making sure each daughter of Israel is cared for under the father or by a husband, whether monogamous or polygynous, the land is not filled with lewdness. YHVH is drawing a straight line between our care for the daughters of Israel and filling the land with harlotry and lewdness. That is why forbidding any kind of marriage, whether monogamous or polygynous, is a doctrine of demons (I Timothy 4:1-3). Authors such as Madan and Campbell have confirmed this connection.

30 You shall keep My Sabbaths and revere My sanctuary; I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:30

Sabbaths here is plural and is not speaking only of the weekly Sabbath but the other ones that are part of the Feasts of the Lord that will be discussed in the next parashah Emor. If we revere His sanctuary, we recognize that is where He meets us from Heaven on Earth. Therefore, the sanctuary is most holy and we must treat it as such.

31 'Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:31

First, given we worship and serve YHVH Most High, why would we seek advice from lesser spirits, many of whom are rebels and deceivers? Second, this is idolatry to follow any spirit other than YHVH! The occult is off limits, period.

32 'You shall stand up in the presence of the grayheaded and honor elders, and you shall fear your God; I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:32

Showing honor and respect to our senior citizens is godly, and it translates to honoring the Ancient of Days.

33 'When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. 34 The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:33-34

Discrimination between the native-born and the stranger who joins himself to Israel is forbidden. We count the ones who join themselves to YHVH to be as the natives, and their descendants are Israelites.

35 'You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measurement of weight, or volume. 36 You shall have accurate balances, accurate weights, an accurate ephah, and an accurate hin; I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt. 37 So you shall keep all My statutes and all My ordinances, and do them; I am the Lord.'" Leviticus 19:35-37

Accuracy in measurement supports accuracy in making judgments which in turn leads to diligent keeping of YHVH's statutes and ordinances.

This concludes our review of chapter 19 of the book of Leviticus and we move on to study chapter 20 next. Leviticus 20 puts teeth into the offenses listed in Leviticus 18 and 19 by listing the punishments for the offenses.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "You shall also say to the sons of Israel: 'Anyone from the sons of Israel or from the strangers residing in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech, shall certainly be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. 3 I will also set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given some of his children to Molech, so as to defile My sanctuary and to profane My holy name. 4 If the people of the land, however, should ever disregard that man when he gives any of his children to Molech, so as not to put him to death, 5 then I Myself will set My face against that man and against his family, and I will cut off from among their people both him and all those who play the prostitute with him, by playing the prostitute with Molech. Leviticus 20:1-5

The offense here is giving one's child in sacrifice to Molech which is forbidden by Leviticus 18:21. Neither native nor stranger are allowed to commit this profane act of idolatry. The death penalty is stoning. No one is allowed to ignore this idolatry if known. Knowing about it and doing nothing is considered participating in idolatry. Here also committing this act of idolatry is synonymous to harlotry or prostitution.

6 'As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the prostitute with them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people. 7 You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. 8 So you shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you. Leviticus 20:6-8

YHVH will cut off those who violate the total prohibition of Leviticus 19:31 against reaching out to the occult in the different ways that exist. He tells us that

avoiding the occult is consecrating ourselves and being holy. By keeping and practicing the statutes, He sanctifies us.

9 'If there is anyone who curses his father or his mother, he shall certainly be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother, and has brought his own death upon himself. Leviticus 20:9

Both Exodus 20:12 and Leviticus 19:3 tell us to honor our mothers and fathers. The penalty for cursing instead of respect and honoring is death. Authority must be respected. Yeshua tells us that YHVH is our Father. Therefore, just as we honor and respect our earthly parents, so also we respect and honor our Heavenly Father.

10 'If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death. Leviticus 20:10

This is the definition of adultery: sleeping with another man's wife and results in both man and wife being executed. Adultery is prohibited by Exodus 20:14. The next two prohibitions are variations of adultery but within the family with the same penalty of death.

11 If there is a man who sleeps with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness. Both of them must be put to death, they have brought their own deaths upon themselves. 12 If there is a man who sleeps with his daughter-in-law, both of them must be put to death. They have committed incest, and have brought their own deaths upon themselves. Leviticus 20:11-12

Leviticus 20:11 is the penalty for transgressing Leviticus 18:7-8 while 20:12 is the penalty for 18:15.

13 If there is a man who sleeps with a male as those who sleep with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they must be put to death. They have brought their own deaths upon themselves. Leviticus 20:13

Male homosexuality is a sexual crime at the same level of male:female adultery. Death is determined for this transgression of Leviticus 18:22.

14 If there is a man who marries a woman and her mother, it is an outrageous sin; both he and they shall be burned with fire, so that there will be no such outrageous sin in your midst. Leviticus 20:14

“Outrageous sin” is the translation of *zimmah* which is lewdness. A man taking a wife and her mother or a wife and her daughter is lewdness, just like making a daughter of Israel a prostitute is lewdness. Death is the penalty for transgressing Leviticus 18:17.

5 If there is a man who has sexual intercourse with an animal, he must be put to death; you shall also kill the animal. 16 If there is a woman who approaches any animal to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they must be put to death. They have brought their own deaths upon themselves. Leviticus 20:15-16

Bestiality transgresses Leviticus 18:23. Neither man nor woman are allowed to mate with beasts. The human and the beast are to both be killed.

17 If there is a man who takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, so that he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace; and they shall be cut off in the sight of the sons of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he bears his guilt. Leviticus 20:17

Cutting off is the penalty for transgressing Leviticus 18:9. This is what happened with King David's children, Amnon and Tamar. Tamar's brother killed Amnon for what he did in taking Tamar and then casting her out. The sad episode is recorded in II Samuel 13.

18 If there is a man who sleeps with a menstruous woman and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed her flow, and she has uncovered the flow of her blood; so both of them shall be cut off from among their people. Leviticus 20:18

No sex during menstruation.

19 You shall also not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister, for such a one has uncovered his blood relative; they will bear their guilt. Leviticus 20:19

Sexual relationships with one's aunts are forbidden by Leviticus 18:12-13.

20 If there is a man who sleeps with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness; they will bear their sin. They will die childless. 21 If there is a man who takes his brother's wife, it is detestable; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They will be childless. Leviticus 20:20-21

Both of these violations of Leviticus 18:14 and 18:16, respectively, result in dying childless.

We now come to the end of the list of punishments for sexual crimes enumerated in Leviticus chapter 18. A careful reading of the above shows that there is no punishment given for a man taking two sisters (Leviticus 18:18), nor was the general case of a man taking two or more wives listed as an offense or described as a sin.

22 'You are therefore to keep all My statutes and all My ordinances, and do them, so that the land to which I am bringing you to live will not vomit you out. 23 Furthermore, you shall not follow the customs of the nation which I am going to drive out before you, because they did all these things; therefore I have felt disgust for them. Leviticus 20:22-23

We don't follow the customs of Egypt, and neither do we follow the customs of Canaan. It then follows that we are to follow His customs, no matter where we live, even in the Diaspora. These customs include religion, food, animal husbandry, marriage and many other areas.

24 So I have said to you, "You are to take possession of their land, and I Myself will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the Lord your God, who has singled you out from the peoples. 25 You are therefore to make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves detestable by animal or by bird, or by anything that crawls on the ground, which I have distinguished for you as unclean. 26 So you are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have singled you out from the peoples to be Mine. Leviticus 20:24-26

Leviticus 20 closes with death decreed for anyone who interfaces with this world and the world of the occult.

27 'Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist must be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; they have brought their own deaths upon themselves.' Leviticus 20:27