



PARSHA PAGES



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● ACHAREI MOS KEDOSHIM - אַחֲרֵי מוֹת קְדוּשִׁים ●

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS WEEK'S PARSHA?

Parshas Acharei Mos begins with Hashem teaching Moshe that Aharon, and any future **Cohen Gadol**, can only enter into the **Kodesh HaKodashim**, the holiest place in the **Mishkan**, on one day of the year: **Yom Kippur**. The Torah describes the unique offerings of Yom Kippur, including two identical goats, one brought as an offering and the other released into the wilderness with the sins of the Jews. The fate of the goats is determined by a lottery. Along with the other offerings, the Cohen cleanses the **Mikdash** and the **Jews** of any sins. The Cohen Gadol wears special clothing for this ceremony and immerses in a ritual bath. The Torah explains that this holiday takes place on the 10th day of the 7th month, **Tishrei**, and that the Jewish people must deny themselves of certain things on that day, and cannot perform **Melacha**, constructive work. This day is the annual day of atonement for the Jews before Hashem. Next, Hashem prohibits the Jews from slaughtering an animal without bringing it as an offering, as well as offering sacrifices to false gods. We are also prohibited from eating blood, and when an animal is killed, its blood must be poured out and covered. Anyone who eats an animal that was killed by another animal is ritually unclean and must bathe. Hashem prohibits the Jews from acting like Egyptians and the other nations living in Israel, and commands them to keep the laws of the Torah. The Torah lists prohibited sexual relationships: relationships between family members, marrying multiple people from the same family, the acts of adultery, homosexuality, and bestiality, as well as prohibiting child sacrifice. If these laws are broken, the land of Israel will reject the Jewish people and anyone who lives there. **Parshas Kedoshim** begins with Hashem commanding the people to be holy, because He is holy. Next, we are told to honor our parents, keep shabbos, not to worship idols, and not to leave the meat of an offering over for more than one day. When harvesting crops, certain areas of the field are to be left for the poor to come and collect. The Torah then teaches many interpersonal laws, primarily regarding theft and damages, and principles such as not placing a stumbling block before the blind, behaving fairly in judgment, and loving one's fellow. Hashem prohibits crossbreeding of cattle and seeds, and **shatnez**, clothes made from wool and linen, and commands the Jews to wait 4 years before eating fruit from a tree. Men are prohibited from cutting the **peyos**, corners, of their hair, from damaging one's body, desecrating one's daughter, and using divination or witchcraft, and are commanded to keep shabbos, respect elders, and behave honestly with converts and strangers in a community. The Torah specifically prohibits serving **Molech**, a false god, with child sacrifices in fire, and prescribes the death penalty for cursing one's parents and for engaging in a prohibited sexual relationship. The Torah prohibits adopting the practices of the other nations living in Israel, because Hashem has set the Jews apart from the other nations, and prohibits defiling one's spiritual status by touching the carcass of an animal. Finally, the Torah repeats the prohibition of divination.

THINK This week's Parsha lists several prohibitions of **divination** or **fortune-telling**. Scholars disagree about the reason for **ABOUT IT:** the prohibition - either because these pursuits are futile, or because they show a lack of trust in G-d. **What do you think?**



WHAT IS HOLINESS?



DISCUSS:

How would you define **holiness**?



What does it mean to be **holy**?



Are you **holy**? Why? Why not?



The commandment of "**Kedoshim Tihui**" can be translated as "**be holy**", but it's important to define what exactly **holiness** is. **Rashi** (1040-1105, France) explains holiness as separating oneself from temptation, specifically in sexual relationships. **Ramban** (1194-1270, Spain & Israel) focuses on self-control and not becoming repulsive within the confines of Torah law, such as overeating Kosher food gluttonously. **Sforno** (1475-1550, Italy) teaches that holiness is behaving in the way that Hashem intended when He created the world. **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** (1948-2020, England) explains that holiness comes by attempting to imitate Hashem's qualities in our actions.

Consider these definitions of **holiness**. Do you agree? Can you think of any other definitions?

If holiness is about **imitating G-d**, what can we do to learn how to be holier?



דַּבֵּר אֶל כָּל עַדְת בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם
קְדוּשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ
אֲנִי ה' אֱ-לֹהֵיכֶם:
(ויקרא יט:ב)

Speak to the whole Jewish people and say to them: **You shall be holy**, for I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy.

THE GOLDEN RULE

One of the most fundamental principles in communal responsibility is the **Golden Rule**, "treat others how you want to be treated". The **Torah's** version is slightly different, and contains deep messages about our interpersonal relationships:

Love your fellow as yourself, I am Hashem.

וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ
כְּמוֹךְ אָנֹכִי ה'



Can you think of any explanations for this commandment? Have you heard any ideas that resonated with you?



How can the Torah command us to love someone?

Ramban (1194-1270, Spain & Israel) explains that loving someone **as yourself** means wanting the best for others the same way that we want the best for ourselves: in every area of life. Our Sages (**Gemara Makkos**) explain this commandment as the foundation for all interpersonal laws in the Torah. The commandment ends with "I am Hashem" to connect our interpersonal behavior and relationship with Hashem.

What can that teach us about how to fulfill this commandment?