



Parashah 30: K'doshim

Leviticus 19:1 - 20:27

“Holy ones”

“Be holy because I, YHWH your God, am holy”

Leviticus 19:2

1. Various Laws - 19:1-37

- a) To whom does Moses address the words in this chapter? According to verse 2, how does God summarize the commandments in this chapter?

Moses addresses his words to “the entire assembly of Israel.” God begins these commands by telling the Israelites to “be holy because He is holy.”

b) Which two of the Ten Commandments are referred to in verse 3? Why do you think these are mentioned together? Why should they be the first ones in this chapter? “Honor your father and your mother”, (# 5, Ex. 20:12) and “Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy”, (# 4, Ex. 20:8-11). *Keeping the Sabbath is how one honors God as one honors his or her parents. Also, the heart attitude one has when honoring one’s parents and when keeping the Sabbath is the heart attitude required to keep oneself holy, separated for use by God.*

c) Which of the Ten Commandments is referred to in verse 4? “You shall make for yourself no idols”, (# 2, Ex. 20:4-6)

- d) What specific action was God prohibiting in verses 5 - 8? Why do you think this was important to God?

Fellowship offerings were to be consumed on the day of the offering or the day following, but none was to be leftover until the third day. God states that if any of the offering is eaten on the third day, it then invalidates the entire offering. It appears that God wants to make sure that his offering meals are not considered commonplace but special and holy.

- e) What practice does God prescribe in verses 9 and 10? Who benefited from this practice? What do you think God was trying to teach with this command?

When a farmer harvests his crop, he is to leave the “gleanings” for the less fortunate to gather. Not only did this benefit the poor and disadvantaged, but it helped others realize that they have a responsibility to those less fortunate. God wants us to give of our blessings to those less fortunate.

- f) Do you see a logical progression in verses 11 and 12? To which of the Ten Commandments do these instructions refer?

Stealing often leads to lying (to cover it up) then to deceiving others (to avoid facing the sin) and finally to swearing falsely as to ones innocence. "Do not steal," (# 8, Ex. 20:15) and "Do not bear false witness," (# 9, Ex. 20:16) are the commandments referenced here.

- g) What character traits do you think God is reinforcing in verse 13? What about verse 14? Do these two come from the same heart attitude?

God is concerned about our personal and business ethics. It's important to treat everyone fairly and considerately, even those less fortunate than you. God wants us to know that he sees all our actions, even if no one else does.

- h) In verse 15, does God's attitude toward the poor surprise you? What does this say about God's viewpoint on justice?

God's justice is "no respecter of persons," either rich or poor. Justice is based strictly on the law, not on the person or situation. Justice is "blind."

- i) How do you think the two statements in verse 16 are tied together?

Spreading slander or gossip about another could easily endanger his life. God is encouraging us to understand the power of our words.

- j) Verses 17 - 18 address our heart attitude toward others. Can you recall any of Yeshua's comments on this topic? How important do you think this command is?

See Matt 5:43-48; 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-39. Romans 13:8-10 also speaks to this passage.

- k) What do you think God intended with the instructions in verse 19?

It is not clear why God wanted the Israelites to keep species and types separate. It could be a reinforcement of the concept of not mixing the sacred with the common. Even the Jewish sages cannot shed much light on this.

- l) Do you think the situation described in verses 20 - 22 has any cultural significance for today or did it apply only to social customs at the time it was written?

It appears that this command applied to a social custom of the period.

- m) What restrictions were placed on the fruit from a newly planted orchard? What do you think the effects of this command would be?

After planting an orchard, no fruit was to be harvested for 3 years. The harvest in the 4th year belonged to God. The owner got the 5th and subsequent year's harvests. This would naturally make the trees more fruitful.

- n) Verses 26 - 32 seem to list a hodge-podge of commands. Which ones do you find particularly interesting? Can you find anything that ties them together?

It seems that most of these commands relate to pagan worship practices. In contrast, the commands to observe the Sabbath and not to cut the sideburns or beard seem to promote separation of the Israelites from other cultures.

- o) How were the Israelites to treat strangers living in their land? What was God's rationale for this command?

Aliens were to be treated well, like native-born Israelites, because the Israelites themselves were once aliens in a foreign land.

- p) Why do you think the instructions given in verses 35 and 36 are important to God? *God is just and demands fairness in all our dealings with our fellow man.*

2. Punishment for Sins - 20:1-27

- a) What punishment does God decree for one "who gives any of his children to Molech"? What do you think it meant to do this? Did this command apply only to Israelites?

Anyone, Israelite or foreigner, who sacrificed a child to Molech was to be put to death. The sacrificing of infants to the god Molech was practiced by the Canaanites and, judging from the language of this command, was particularly abhorrent to God.

- b) What was the punishment for consulting mediums and spiritists? Who carried out this punishment? What happened to one who was a medium or spiritist?

God "set his face against" the person who consulted mediums or spiritists and "cut him off from his people." In other words, God would no longer communicate with one who did this. According to verse 27, a medium or spiritist found among the Israelites was to be stoned.

- c) Can you paraphrase the admonition given in verse 7?

One paraphrase might be "Set yourselves apart from other peoples and obey my commands that you may be used by me."

- d) List the specific sins mentioned in this chapter that are punishable by death. What do you think is meant by "his blood will be on his own head"? What insight does this give you into God's view of sexual sin?

The top of the list is child sacrifice to Molech. Then 1) cursing ones parent, 2) committing adultery, 3) sex with a close relative, 4) homosexuality, 5) sex with both a mother and daughter, and 6) sex with animals. The phrase "his blood is on his own head" implies that the sinner will pay the just penalty for his sin with his own life's blood. Jewish Sages believe this meant death by stoning. God clearly takes sexual sin very seriously - it defiled the land.

- e) What punishments are required for some of the "lesser" sins described in this chapter? Who do you think carries out these punishments?

Some sins carried the penalty of being "cut off from his people," presumably carried out by the community itself. For others (like marrying a brother's wife while he is still living), God exacted a penalty of childlessness.

- f) According to verse 22, why **should** the Israelites keep these commandments?

According to verse 26, why does God **want** the Israelites to keep his commandments? *The Israelites were to keep these commands so that they would not defile the land and so that it would not "vomit them out."*

Digging deeper

1. How many times does the phrase “I am the Lord” or “I am YHWH” appear in chapter 19? Can you find any significance in the apparently random order in which these commands are listed?

The phrase “I am the Lord” appears at least 15 times in this chapter. Perhaps the seemingly random order is meant to emphasize the fact that all commands are equally important to God in that they separate the sinner from God. Also, there are often subtle connections between seemingly diverse commands providing additional insight into God’s character.

2. In Mark 12:28-34 and in Luke 10:25-39, Yeshua refers to this passage in Leviticus. Does his teaching shed any additional light on this subject for you? Are Paul’s comments in Romans 13:8-10 consistent with your understanding?

The Romans passage summarizes Leviticus Chapter 19 quite well.