

Parshat Kedoshim

Kedoshim begins with God speaking to Moses saying: Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them...You shall be holy (Kedoshim Tehiyu) for I, God am holy.

Chapters 19 of Vayikra is the key to understanding the covenant of Ancient Israel. Biblical Scholars call chapters 18, 19, and 20 the Holiness Code. This code repeats all of the Ten Commandments putting them in a new order and sometimes in new words. These commands are put besides the laws of farming, sacrifice, ritual and the way we should treat the stranger.

The word kadosh, holy is a word that we know already. Marriage is known as kiddushin, a holy partnership. Kiddush is recited on Shabbat and Festivals. Mourners say Kaddish when a close loved one dies. We also say the words Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh during the Amida.

We are told that the Israelites are holy because God is holy.

The text states that You shall each honor your mother and father, and keep the Shabbat, I am your God. Do not turn to idols and make molten gods for yourselves, I am Adonai your God.

Rashi notes that in this version of the Commandments Mother is mentioned first while in the other version of the Ten Commandments. Rashi believes that this is to show that both father and mother are equally important.

Vayirka states that "You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind.

Also in this parshat is the Golden Rule. "Love your neighbor as yourself, I am Adonai. Rashi comments that disobeying any of these laws are matters of the heart. People know the truth in their hearts, even if they hide it in public. But the words, "I am Adonai" are repeated with the laws to remind us that God always know what is in a person's heart.

We also have laws about the growing of fruit trees and bringing the first fruits to Jerusalem. This pashah also repeats the law against eating blood. It also gives the laws of not cutting your beard or sideburns with a razor. Probably because someone could accidentally cut themselves.