

April 26, 2018

Parashat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim

Leviticus 16:1–20:27

<https://mirowitztorahreading.weebly.com/acharei-mot.html>

<https://www.sefaria.org/Leviticus.16.1-17?lang=bi&aliyot=0>

Noam

Noam ben Daniel v'Rachel

Parker

Yosef ben Chanan Binyamin v'Shoshana Emet

Eden

Eden bat Eran v'Arza

Leah

Yehudit bat Aharon v'Yehudit

Dvir

Dvir ben Guy v'Sivan

Parker: This week's Torah portion is *Acharei Mot-Kedoshim*. We are reading from *Sefer Vayikra*, Leviticus 16, Verses 1-3. The first portion of our double reading, *Acharei Mot*, describes the *Yom Kippur* service performed by the *Kohen Gadol*, the High Priest. The service includes the *Kohen Gadol's* confessing his own mistakes and harmful behavior and that of the entire Israelite nation.

Noam: To mark *Yom Kippur*, there is a lottery selection between two identical goats. One is chosen to be sacrificed by the *kohen* on behalf of the Israelites as a way of admitting that the community has made mistakes. Sometimes--even after we try to take responsibility for our mistakes and make things right--we still might feel badly about what we did. We want to make that feeling go away. That is what the other goat is for. For the goat that wasn't sacrificed, the *kohen* put his hands on its head then sent it out into the wilderness, almost like he was sending away the bad feelings people might have had about their mistakes.

Parker: The second portion of our double reading, *Kedoshim*, begins with the command to be holy - *kedoshim tihyu - you shall be holy for I, Adonai, your G-d am holy*. The portion contains many *mitzvot* which--if we follow them--can help us act in holy ways. These include respecting our parents, keeping the Sabbath, dealing honestly with our neighbors, not gossiping, not standing by and doing nothing when someone is being hurt, and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

1) Noam: In the second verse of *Kedoshim*--the second of this week's two *parashiyot*--we read that G!d tells Moshe to tell the Israelites

קְדוֹשִׁים תְּהִיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱ-לֹהֵיכֶם: "... Be holy because, holy am I *A-donai* your G!d!" Couldn't G!d have just told us to be holy? Why do you think G!d also wanted to tell them, "Because holy am I, *A-donai* your G!d"? <<Leah picks 3>>

Eden: I think that this might be G!d's way of telling us how we can be holy. We can make ourselves holy by trying to understand what God does and why and then trying to act like G!d.

Dvir: The phrase, "אֲנִי ה'", "I am G!d" repeats after many of the *mitzvot* in this *parasha*--maybe to teach us that loving the stranger, or leaving fruit in the field for the poor, or not insulting the deaf are holy things that G!d does. When we act like this we make ourselves holy like G!d.

2) Leah: A few verses later we read, "When a stranger lives with you in your land, do not treat her or him badly. The stranger who lives with you should be like a citizen to you, and you should love her / him like you love yourself because you were strangers in the Land of Egypt. I am *Adonai* your G!d." What do you think it might mean to love the stranger as yourself? What might it mean to treat a stranger--who you love--like yourself? <<Parker Picks 3>>

Eden: I think that the Torah is telling us here that people from other countries living in our land are people who are no different from us. Just like we want people to love us, they also want people to love them, and it is our job to make them feel loved.

Noam: The medieval commentator Ibn Ezra said that loving someone like yourself means that one should work to love the good parts of another person--even someone new to your community--the way that one loves the good parts of oneself. I like this answer because he's teaching us to look for the good parts of the stranger and when we do that, we get to know the stranger and maybe they're not a stranger to us anymore.

3) Parker: A little later in *Parashat Kedoshim* we learn the *mitzvot*, “Do not insult the deaf or place a stumbling block before the blind.” The idea of putting a block in front of a blind person to make them trip just seems so mean that it’s hard for me to imagine a person would do it. It is surprising to me that the Torah tell us not to do this. What do you think the Torah might really be telling us when it is telling us not to insult a deaf person or put a stumbling block before the blind? Please turn to discuss your thoughts with the person sitting next to you. <<Leah picks 2, Eden picks 1>>

Noam: I think that the Torah might be telling us not to bully. Bullies see other peoples’ weaknesses and take advantage of them or make fun of them in ways that can really hurt. I think the Torah is telling us that we should not pick on other people for their weaknesses.