

Kedoshim - And Now, Some Words From Our Commentators
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ויקרא י"ט:ב' דָּבַר אֱלֹהִים-כָּל-עֵדָתְךָ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם
קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

Leviticus 19:2 *Speak to **the entire community** of the Children of Israel, and say to them: Holy are you to be, for holy am I 'ה your God!*

רש"י: דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל. מלמד שצאמרה פְּרִשָּׁה זו בקהלה מפני שרבו גופי תורה תלויין בה (ספרא):

Rashi: *Speak to **the entire community** of the Children of Israel — This (the addition of the words **כל עדת**) teaches us that this section was proclaimed in full assembly because most of the fundamental teachings (lit. the body of Torah) of the Torah are derived from it (Sifra) Comment:*

The two words **כל-עֵדָתְךָ** - **the entire community** are superfluous. What would be the point of adding them? To emphasize the democratic nature of Torah. Unlike other religions in which the core teachings belong to the elite, in Judaism, the core teachings belong to everyone. This chapter is arguably the essence of the Torah. Back in Exodus we were told that the people of Israel was to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. *וְאַתֶּם וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ תִּהְיוּ לִי מִמְּלַכְתּוֹת כְּהֹנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ* (Exod. 19:6) What follows in this chapter are the details of how Israel was to **become** a holy nation. But there is a deeper message in this teaching. If this chapter contains the core teachings of Torah, then it ought to propel you automatically to a process of analysis and inquiry. Everything you do has to be adjudicated on the basis of answering the question: *is this how to be a holy people? Indeed, what makes me holy? How do I live a holy life?* **Rashi** answers that question as follows:

קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ. הָיוּ פְרוֹשִׁים מִן הַעֲבֵרוֹת וּמִן הַעֲבָרָה, שֶׁכָּל מָקוֹם שֶׁאֲתָהּ מוֹצֵא גֹדֵר עֲרָה אֲתָהּ מוֹצֵא קְדוּשָׁה

You shall be holy — *This means, keep separate yourselves from sexual transgressions and from sin for wherever you find guardrails against sexual transgressions you also find "holiness".*

Comment: This shouldn't surprise us. Human sexuality differentiates us from all living creatures. How we conduct our intimate lives can validate our dignity. Victims of sexual violence however, live with unbearable suffering. To Rashi, the commandment *Be Holy* starts in the sphere of our lives that arguably makes us most human. Ramban has a different view.

...ולפי דעתי אין הפרישות הזו לפרוש מן העריות כדברי הרב אבל הפרישות היא המזכרת בכל מקום... והענין כי התורה הזהירה בעריות ובמאכלים האסורים והתירה הביאה איש באשתו ואכילת הבשר והיין א"כ ימצא בעל התאווה מקום להיות שטוף בזמת אשתו או נשיו הרבות ולהיות בסובאי יין בזוללי בשר למו וידבר כרצונו בכל הנבלות שלא הוזכר איסור זה בתורה והנה יהיה **נבל ברשות התורה** לפיכך בא הכתוב אחרי שפרט האיסורים שאסר אותם לגמרי וצוה בדבר כללי שנהיה פרושים מן המותרות...

*And in my opinion, this abstinence does not refer only to restraint from acts of sexual transgressions, as the Rabbi [Rashi] wrote, but rather, the practice of self-control mentioned throughout the Talmud... At issue is this: the Torah warned us against sexual transgressions eating forbidden foods, but permitted sex between a husband and wife, and the eating of meat and wine. If that is the case, someone with excessive desire could consider this to support his desire to be constantly engaged in sex with his wife or his many wives, and be among winebibbers, among gluttonous eaters of flesh, and speak freely all profanities, since this prohibition has not been [expressly] mentioned in the Torah, and thus he will become **vile with the imprimatur of Torah naval b'rshut ha-Torah!** Therefore, after having listed the matters which He prohibited altogether, Scripture followed them up by a general command that we practice moderation even in matters which are permitted.* Comment: Ramban takes Rashi's position to its logical conclusion. While the Torah has a whole list of prohibited sexual relationships, it also provides a framework of permitted sexual relationships. Based on Rashi, there are plenty of areas of life that, if you do them to excess, you would **still be considered** holy. Ramban sees this as a flaw in Rashi's comment. For him, the Torah's aim is to cultivate the individual, and the key to that, is living a life of moderation; a life that refrains from excess, even when a particular behavior is permitted.

Aviva Zornberg: *Like a pool of sunlight in a tangled forest, the demand of holiness moves us from a world of specific taboos, anomalies, and abominations to a blinding moment of aspiration.* Comment: *Be Holy* is an aspirational statement. *Be holy* means *be attuned* to the call and aspire!

י"ט:ג' איש אמו ואביו תיראו ואת-שבתתי תשמרו אני ה' אלהיכם:

19:3 *You shall each revere your mother and your father, and keep My sabbaths: I ה am your God.*

It is often noted that the laws here echo those of the Ten Commandments. There it says כבד-respect here it says תיראו-revere. There it says honor your **father** and your **mother**, here it is in reverse: *revere your **mother** and your **father**.*

Rashi: כאן הקדים אם לאב, לפי שגלוי לפניו שהבן ירא את אביו יותר מאמו, ובכבוד הקדים אב לאם, לפי שגלוי לפניו שהבן מכבד את אמו יותר מאביו, מפני שמשדלתו בדברים:

*Here Scripture mentions the mother before the father because it is self-evident to God that a child **fears** the father more than the mother; regarding honor, Scripture mentions the father before the mother because it is self-evident to God that the child **honors** the mother more than the father because she is always trying to encourage him with words.* This is a classic text that attempts to explain a classic problem. It makes for a great debate: Who do you naturally fear more, your father or your mother? Who do you respect more? Additionally, we have the juxtaposition of the commandment to revere parents with the commandment to keep Shabbat.

Why are the two commandments consecutive? ואת שבתתי תשמרו. סמה שבת למורה אב, לומר אף על פי שהזקרה תיך על מורה אב, אם יאמר לך חלל את השבת, אל תשמע לו, וכן בשאר כל המצוות (בבא מציעא ל"ב):

And my Sabbaths you shall keep — Scripture places the commandment to keep Shabbat consecutive to the commandment to revere one's father in order to convey (that God is saying):

"Even though I am telling you to revere your father, if he tells you: "Desecrate the Sabbath", do not listen to him" — and the same is the case with the other commandments. The brilliance of this comment is that it anticipates a parent/child conflict may arise in the observance of Judaism. What happens when honoring your parents collides with keeping Shabbat? The Torah states that in that instance, you keep Shabbat. And the reason for that is because the text ends with:

אני ה' אלהיכם. אתה ואביו חביבים בכבודי, לפיכך לא תשמע לו לבטל את דברי.

I am the Lord your God. You and your father are both obligated to honor Me, (first and foremost). Therefore, you shall not listen to him to nullify My words. Thus, the Torah reasons that the child is justified in disobeying the parents because they

too are obligated to keep Shabbat. While the commentary may seem harsh and destructive to the parent/child relationship, with wisdom, compassion and creativity, it can actually serve as a starting point to prevent the rupture of the relationship. And finally, what is the difference between *revering* and *respecting*?

איזהו מורה? לא ישב במקומו ולא ידבר במקומו ולא יסתור את דבריו, ואיזהו כבוד? מאכיל ומשקה, מלביש ומנעיל, מכניס ומוציא (קידושין ל"א):

What is reverence? *You do not sit in your father's seat, nor speak in his place and do not contradict his words. And what is respect?* *Providing food and drink, clothing and shoes, bringing them in and taking them out.*

Source:	Exodus 20	Leviticus 19
Context:	Sinai Covenant	Holiness Code
Value:	Respect כבוד	Revere מורה
Concern:	Well-being	Relationship
Sphere:	Physical	Emotional
Goal:	Improving their lives.	Improving our characters.

י"ט:ד' אל-תפנו אל-האלילים ואלהי מסכה לא תעשו לכם אני ה' אלהיכם:

19:4 *Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves: I ה am your God.*

ספרא, קדושים, פרשה א יי "אל תפנו אל האלילים" – אל תפנה לעבדם. ר' יהודה אומר אל תפנה לראותם ודיו.

Sifra, Kedoshim, Section 1 10 *"Do not turn to the idols (elilim)": Do not turn to them to worship them. R. Yehudah says: Do not turn to them to look at them at all.* R. Yehuda would want us not even to look at them presumably, as pieces of art or sculpture. What would have been his reasoning?

י"ט:י"ד לא-תקלל חרש ולפני עור לא תתן מפשל וגראת מאלתיה אני ה':

19:14 *You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God: I am ה.* What is a stumbling block?

ולפני עור לא תתן מכשול. לפני הסומא בדבר לא תתן עצה שאינה הוגנת לו, אל תאמר מכר שדה וקח לה תמור, ואתה עוקף עליו ונוטלה הימנו:

Rashi: *You shall not put a stumbling block before the blind:— that is, someone who is blind in a particular way. Do not give such a person advice that is not suited for him. Do not say to him, "Sell your field and buy an ass," and all the while you are intending to circumvent him and procure it from him.* Holiness is not taking advantage of the vulnerability in another person. Shabbat Shalom!