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Parshat Kedoshim

Parsha Summary -

The Parsha starts with Hashem telling Moshe to tell the people that “[they] shall be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy.”

This is followed by a list of mitzvot, some of which are listed below:

- “Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves: I the LORD am your God.”
- “You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another.”
- “You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD.”
- “You shall not eat anything with its blood.”
- “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the LORD.”

(Topics ranging from idolatry, charity, equality, Shabbat, morality, honesty, parents, life, and more).

Classical Commentary -

Rashi (1040-1105, France):

קְדוּשִׁים תִּהְיוּ. הָיוּ פְּרוֹשִׁים מִן הָעֲרִיּוֹת וּמִן הָעֵבֶרָה, שְׁכָל מָקוֹם שֶׁאַתָּה מוֹצֵא גֹדֶר עֲרוּהָ אַתָּה מוֹצֵא קְדוּשָׁה, אִשָּׁה זֶנָּה וְחֻלְלָה וְגו' אֲנִי ה' מְקַדְּשְׁכֶם (ויקרא כ"א), וְלֹא יִחַלֵּל זֶרַעוֹ, אֲנִי ה' מְקַדְּשׁוֹ (שם), קְדוּשִׁים יִהְיוּ, אִשָּׁה זֶנָּה וְחֻלְלָה (שם):

YE SHALL BE HOLY — This means, keep aloof from the forbidden sexual relations just mentioned and from sinful thoughts. [It is evident that this is the meaning of **קְדוּשִׁים תִּהְיוּ** because] wherever you find in the Torah a command to fence yourself in against such relations you also find mention of “holiness”. Examples are: (**Leviticus 21:7**) “[They shall not take] a wife that is a harlot, or a profane etc.”, and in the next verse “for I, the Lord, who sanctifieth you, [am holy]”; (**Leviticus 21:15**) “Neither shall he profane his seed (by the forbidden unions mentioned in the preceding verses) for I the Lord do sanctify him”; (**Leviticus 21:6**) “They shall be holy... followed by (v. 7) “[they shall not take] a wife that is a harlot or a profane” (cf. **Vayikra Rabbah 24:4-6**).

The Parshah opens with the mitzvah “You shall be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy.” This leaves us with the question: What does it truly mean to be holy?

Rashi seems to think that this holiness is refraining from forbidden relations and sinful thoughts (discussed in last week’s Parsha). Ramban answers this question as not being a “naval b’reshus ha’Torah - a crass glutton with the permission of the torah”. Meaning, just because one is allowed to eat and drink kosher meat and wine does not mean that is all one should do, even if it can be technically seen as ‘permissible’. After reading these, as well as some other commentaries, it seems there is a common theme in the definition of holiness, and that is self-control. A human being has incredibly strong lusts and desires, and if it were to constantly satisfy all of them, it seems that it could easily be perceived as nothing else than an animal in human form. Hashem commands us to take control over these desires and only satisfy them for good purpose, this could be enjoying a tasty meal on Shabbat to enhance the beauty of the day. In conclusion, we must maintain human dignity and control our desires and in that way preserve our holiness.

Art -



Yoram Raanan (Beit Meir - West of Jerusalem)

There are many Mitzvot listed throughout Parshat Kedoshim. I think this painting is specifically depicting the Mitzvah; “Love your fellow as yourself”. First of all, the colors are very warm tones, (red, purple, yellow, orange) which symbolizes love as well as compassion. Additionally, the picture itself is of many people standing together, which shows unity and could imply that they are all helping each other. In the middle it looks like a woman is holding her hand up to another’s face as if she is helping him with something or even just listening to what he is in need for.



Hanna Perlberger (Philadelphia, her practice is in Trusts and Estates and Family Law)

Once again we take a look at the opening mitzvah of the Parsha; “You shall be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy.” To adhere to this standard of being holy we must follow many rules. When Bnei Israel left Egypt they were given freedom. However, to keep this freedom they must take on responsibility; the list of responsibilities listed in this Parsha. So one could actually look at this term ‘holiness’ and these mitzvot being given to Bnei Israel as the granting of a permanent form of freedom, the becoming of an independent nation, that will never again be enslaved. The hands in the picture are rapped with yellow string that was ripped which is symbolic of Bnei Israel leaving Egypt. The hand are red, clenched, and tense, representing the difficulties of freedom and this new bearing of responsibility, this new freedom.