

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Kedoshim	11 May, 2019	6 Iyyar 5779	Lev. 19:1-20:27	Amos 9:7-15	Mark 12:28-34

This week's Torah portion *Kedoshim* means set-apart (commonly translated as 'holy'). *Kedoshim* means separated. However, it does not mean separation from the world we live in. *Kedoshim* means high level of spiritual level of observance of Torah. The verses tell us that we should all be *kadosh* (set-apart). When Moshe came down from Mount Sinai first time, he told Yisraelites that they should be priests to the nations, a light to the nations (in Hebrew '*goy kadosh*'). (Exo. 19:5-6) '*Goy*' is not a derogatory word. It also means 'body.' So, '*goy kadosh*' means a 'body of nation'. So, *kedoshim* is being separated to do certain tasks Hashem has set.

*Kedoshim* explains how to be *kadosh* with 51 basic *mitzvot* (deeds). It is the shortest *parsha* (portion) with 60 verses which is the foundation of *torot* (commandments, teachings). This week's portion is teaching us how to be *kadosh* (holy). Now, in verse 2 it says, "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Yisrael." There are two incidences when Hashem said to Moshe, "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Yisrael." The very first time is in Exodus 35:1 and second time in this week's portion.

When Moshe received instructions to teach the Yisraelites, he taught to Aharon first. Then Moshe taught Aharon and his sons. He would then gather the elders along with Aharon and his sons, and retaught the commandments. Then the elders taught the children of Yisrael. However, this week's portion Moshe gathered "all the children of Yisrael" to teach Hashem's commandments.

The Torah does not teach us to be separated from the world. If we are separated, how can we be *kadosh*? If you are in a cave and completely separated from the world, how can you know that you are holy without challenges in life? We are to mingle and toil with the world and become *kadosh* (set-apart) by following the Words of YHWH. Rashi said that this week's portion is the foundation of the Torah. The Torah is teaching us how to be *kadosha* (holiness) from parashat *Kedoshim*.

There is a story of four people who experienced PaRDeS. One of the people was Ben Azai who was engaged to Akiva's daughter. Of the four people, only Akiva remained sane and Ben Azai died. The other two became mentally deranged. Why did Ben Azai die? The Gemara explains that it was his divorce with Akiva's daughter that killed him. Before Ben Azai experienced PaRDeS, he told her that he wanted to remain set-apart from the world as his soul desires only the Torah. He did not realize being separated from the world by divorcing his wife, he violated Hashem's commandment of "be fruitful and multiply".

Another example is Nadab and Abihu. The Torah gives explanation for their death. First, they brought 'strange fire'. Second, they were intoxicated. Third, they did not have any children as explained last week that they lived with their father as the Torah says, "the sons of Aharon". Lastly, they belittled Moshe and Aharon by saying, "When would they die?" The Gemara adds another by saying that they wanted to be separated (not married) from this world by being 'holy in this world'. It was for this reason they died. In conclusion, Ben Azai, Nadab and Abihu died in attempt to avoid from the reality. So, the Torah is teaching us not to run away from the reality.

We learned the meanings of PaRDeS previously. We will review them briefly. "P" is '*pashat*'. It means literal, meaning it is written as it is, simple and easy to understand. "R" is '*resh*'. It means hints. "D" is '*drash*', meaning allegory. And "S" is '*sod*', meaning hidden.

Returning to our *parasha*, Hashem gave commandments from the easiest to the hardest. We can easily understand to honor your parents, or not to worship idols, or to eat peace-offering within two days. And the hardest is to distinguish foods prepared for you is kosher or not. As explained before, it is easy to consume clean food, but it is the world that makes it hard. For many Asians, it is difficult not to consume food that does not contain pork in the restaurant. For example, the other day, my son ordered a chicken fried rice. When the food came out, it had a black bean paste that contained pork meat which he did not order. Of course, he could not eat it and had to reorder it without pork. We take a lot of things for granted. We need to be diligent when eating food outside the house.

Now, in *Acharei Mot* (After the Death) we heard of Molech in Leviticus 18:21, “And do not give any of your offspring to pass through to Molech. And do not profane the Name of your Elohim. I am YHWH.” In the portion of *Kedoshim*, we read about the consequences of such an action in Leviticus 20:2-5. Then in Deuteronomy 18:10, “Let no one be found among you who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire.” Rashi said that this was a unique service of the Molech. Rambam counts the prohibition of passing one’s child through Molech as a negative commandment #7 of 365. We studied in the past that there are 365 negative commandments (prohibited) and 248 positive commandments (permitted).

A question is raised whether the child died or not. The Midrash explains that the child died during the service. However, not all agree. Rambam said that the child survived but emotionally scarred for life. Others say that the child died. The pagan priests would bang on the drums or clap their hand loudly to cover the scream of a child’s plea for help. Despite Hashem’s warnings, King Sh’lomoh (Solomon) “built a high place for Kemosh the abomination of Mo’ab, on the hill that is east of Yerushalayim, and for Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon.” (1Kings 11:7) Ahaz also allowed his son to pass through fire (2Kings 16:3), as well as Menashe in Second Chronicles 33:6. In the book of Jeremiah 7:31, “And they [the children of Yehudah] built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart.”

There is some who claims that they never heard of this ritual despite reading the Scriptures whether in English or any other languages and believe it all to be a fabrication. While the translation of Hebrew into English or other languages can lose some of its original meanings, however the context is not lost. The problem is we tend to read with our eyes closed. Meaning when we read, our mind tends to gloss over the words and skip them. Thus, our eyes tend to trick (or blind) to read what we want to read and not what it says. Thus, we need to open our “spiritual” eyes to fully read what says in the Scriptures. So, pause over each verse and think what it means before going to the next verse.

The Zohar tells us that we all have *yetzer* (inclination) in us. While *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) gets bad reputation, it is *yetzer hara* that pushes us to do better. Of course, if we feed *yetzer hara* with wrong type of food, it will go against the will of Hashem. For example, let’s say, you want to follow and read a Daily Reading Schedule. How many times were you not able to read daily? We were busy doing this and that. This is the “wrong food” we are feeding to *yetzer hara*. However, when we read and follow the schedule by setting apart the time, the *yetzer hara* becomes “good food” and its resistance will become weaker. Remember, the study of Torah is the foundation of our life. It feeds our *ruach* (soul) which in turns gives us not only a spiritual energy but physical energy as well.