

K'DOSHIM {קְדוֹשִׁים}(Holy Ones)

You Shall be Holy (Kadosh) קדוש

By Hannah Neshet
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Leviticus 19:1-20:27; Amos 9:7–15 (for Ashkenazi Jews ¹); Ezekiel 20:2–20 (for Sephardi Jews ²); 1 Corinthians 6:9-20

Shalom and welcome to our Torah study on this week's portion of scripture, K'doshim. The word, K'doshim is the plural form of the word 'kadosh' קדוש which means 'holy, sanctified, sacred, hallowed or set apart'. K'doshim continues with further commandments (mitzvot) related to living a life of holiness or sanctification.

God asks that we be holy (kadosh) just as He is: "You shall be holy (kadosh קדוש), for I, YHVH {יהוה} your God, am holy." (Leviticus 19:2)

¹ Ashkenazi Jews are those from Europe and North America. They have dialects, liturgies and customs that are distinct from Sephardi Jews.

² The name Sephardi means "Spanish" or "Hispanic", derived from Sepharad (Hebrew: סְפָרַד), More broadly it includes 'Oriental Jews' from Middle Eastern, North African and Western Asian countries.

When Holy Doesn't Look Holy

One night, we sang a beautiful song in our kehilla (congregation) called Hinei Chayai (Here is my Life). It is a song about sanctifying our entire life before the Lord.

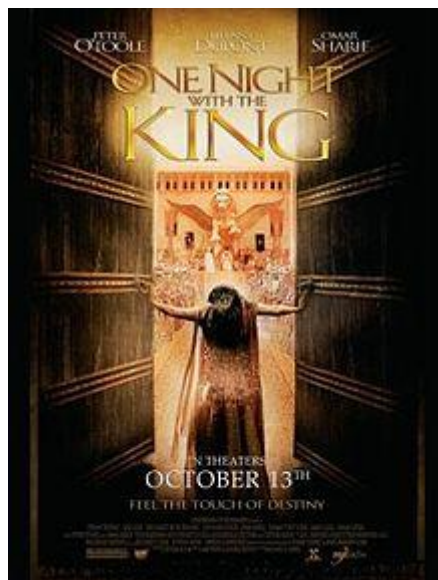
Hinei Hayai, ani noten l'cha (Here is my life; I give it to You,
Libi, nafshi, (My heart, my soul),
Aseh bi et r'tzoncha (May Your will be done in me)

Aseh oti kadosh (Make me holy)
Kadosh lifnei eneicha (holy before Your eyes)

When we receive the Holy Spirit, God places within our heart and soul a deep longing to be holy and pleasing unto Him. This is why I especially love this one line that says, "Make me holy before **Your** eyes..." because first of all, it is God who makes us holy.

And secondly, holiness may not necessarily look the way it's 'supposed to' in the eyes of people. God may require us to do something that may not look exactly 'holy' to people; but in God's eyes, we are truly 'kados'h – set apart for His special purposes. I think of Esther, sweetly singing this song to herself as she prepares for her night with the Persian King.

In the eyes of others, and especially the Jews, she probably looked far from holy – consenting to spending a night with an uncircumcised pagan king?! Unthinkable for a 'nice Jewish girl'! And yet this was God's will for Esther – that she would be placed in a royal position for exactly such a God-appointed time to save her people from destruction.



Poster for movie based on [Hadassah: One Night with the King](#) by [Tommy Tenney](#) & Mark Andrew Olsen

We are each individuals and God treats us as such. As a Messianic Jew, I am certainly not considered 'holy' by my Orthodox Jewish brethren; but rather a traitor to my people. What is important is not how people see us, but how God looks upon us. So let us allow God to make us holy – even if only before His eyes.

What Holiness is NOT

It seems that we have some confusion about holiness. What does it really mean to be holy? Maybe it would help to begin with defining what holiness is not:

Holiness is not wearing a uniform

The Orthodox religious Jews in Israel have a certain way of dressing that constitutes holiness for them. The black hats, (or better yet, the fur hats which have their own special plastic coverings in the rain), the long black overcoats (worn even in 100+ degree sweltering Middle Eastern heat), the long side curls called peyote (curled to perfection – how DO they do that?) and the long, flowing beards, all give a picture of a ‘tzadik’ – a holy, righteous man.

As I walked past a busy square the other day in a religious area of Israel, I heard the cell phone salesman calling out to the Orthodox men walking past – “Hey, Tzadik³! Do you want to buy a phone?...” How did he know they were righteous men? Because of their ‘*holy uniform*’. But I know of several Orthodox Jews have confidentially confessed to a Messianic Pastor (who worked among them) that this was only a ‘*costume*’ – a cover for their secret sins and brokenness.⁴



Orthodox Jews in their traditional black and white suits and black hats set up a tefillin (phylacteries) stand downtown Jerusalem

Holiness is not legalism

Strict observance of hundreds of stringent man-made rules regulating every minute detail of our lives is supposed to make us holy, according to the Orthodox Jewish Rabbinic authorities. On the Sabbath (Shabbat), we are not allowed to use any electricity, drive a car or ride in any vehicle, answer the telephone, write, dig, or rip (even to the extent of using pre-ripped toilet paper!).



Ultra Orthodox pray (along with Spiderman) on Purim at the Kotel

I have Orthodox Jewish family members that will not eat food products stamped with some rabbinic kosher seals of approval because they are not considered to have high enough standards of kashrut⁵. When they came to visit Israel last Passover, they stayed with an ultra-Orthodox family (the ones that wear the fur hats) in Ramat Beit Shemesh.

³ Tzadik – ‘righteous man’

⁴ See article, “[White Washed Walls](http://www.voiceforisrael.net/articles)’ on website: www.voiceforisrael.net/articles

⁵ Kashrut – kosher dietary laws

This family believes that one must not eat matzah (unleavened bread) on Passover with any liquid (since this could potentially cause a minute amount of leavening in the digestive process) so they had to eat nothing but chicken and potatoes for four days straight. Oye!

This is a desperate attempt to be holy before a holy God; but how can we ever reach this impossible goal? It is like trying to jump to the moon – no matter how high we jump it is just never going to be high enough. *Holiness in the Kingdom of God is not about meat or drink or manner of dress but about peace, joy and righteousness in the Holy Spirit!*⁶

Holiness is not poverty

Holiness also does not necessarily equate with poverty. Some people think that one has to be poor in order to be holy. It has been taught in some Christian circles that holiness and poverty go hand in hand. Perhaps the ‘prosperity gospel’ is simply a backlash against this erroneous doctrine.

Of course there are people who voluntarily take a vow of poverty in order to give themselves completely to God and this is good and honorable if God has called them to do so. However, we are not more holy if we are poor. Poverty, lack, and want are not necessarily blessings. In fact, these are some of the curses listed in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy as a consequence for disobedience to God.



Homeless beggar in Jerusalem

“Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the LORD sends against you.” (Deuteronomy 28:47-48)

God has promised to bless us abundantly in the context of mutual covenantal relationship. Our father Abraham was rich, and God called him righteous due to his great faith and obedience. Abraham’s son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob, were also wealthy in terms of material possessions. It is possible to be wealthy and also remain a spiritual, obedient servant of the Lord. We can do much to further the Kingdom of God out of the abundance that God has blessed us with if we keep our priorities straight. Neither poverty

⁶ Romans 14:17

nor riches is a sign of holiness. The truth is that we can be just as holy when we are financially comfortable as when we are in financial need or lack.

Holiness is not perfection

So if we know some of the things that holiness is NOT, then what exactly is it? This is a hard question that I sometimes wonder about. If holy means perfect, then no, I certainly cannot be holy since I am well aware of my faults, failings and weaknesses. The hard truth is that we all fall short of the glory of God each and every day of our lives.⁷

So ‘holy’ must not mean perfect because holiness must be ‘do-able’. God would not ask us to do something we simply cannot do.

However, the question remains, “How can a common people aspire to such a lofty goal as to imitate God in His holiness?” The key is in the words, “*Ve’halachta bidrachav, וְהִלַּכְתָּ בְּדַרְכָיו*” (And you shall walk in His ways...).” (Deuteronomy 28:9)

We are to emulate the character of God – as He is merciful we are to be merciful; as He is patient, kind and forgiving so are we to walk in these paths. Yeshua also instructed us to imitate God. He said, “**Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**” (Matthew 5:48)

How are we to be perfect in the weaknesses and faults of our humanity? The answer lies in the Hebrew - the word used here is not ‘perfect’ but rather ‘whole’ (shalem).

David, the Psalmist, also wrote, “**I will behave wisely in a perfect way... I will walk within my house with a perfect heart....**” (Psalm 101:2)

When reading this English translation, we could become discouraged, thinking, “*I can never be perfect; therefore I must be disqualified.*” In the original Hebrew, however, we may see the true meaning.

Rather than the words ‘perfect’, the Hebrew words used here are, “*derech tamim*”, and “*lev tam*” which mean a ‘*pure path*’ and a ‘*pure heart*’. God does not expect us to be perfect; but He does want us to walk in His ways – along paths of purity and holiness – and with a pure heart.

God says that those who walk in these ‘paths of purity’ shall serve Him but those who deal deceitfully shall not dwell within His house or remain in His presence.

“**My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; the one whose walk is blameless (*b’derech tamim*) will serve Me. No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.**” (Psalm 101: 6-7)

⁷ Romans 3:23

Defining Holiness

God says to be holy (kadosh) as He is holy (kadosh). We are not only to worship God, but to actually imitate Him in His holiness. Because we are made in His image, we are to be 'like' Him. Therefore, since He is holy, we are also meant to be holy. Defining holiness is obviously a crucial issue, since the Word of God tells us that **“without peace and holiness, one will not see the Lord.”**⁸

The obvious question, then, is - how? How are we to live in order that we are holy like God is holy? We know that first and primarily we are made holy through faith in Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah) - we are sanctified through His blood. As we draw closer and closer to God through Him, we will naturally be made more and more holy. However the question remains: *How are we to walk in a holy lifestyle on a practical, day to day basis?*

The Torah – Our Holiness Instruction Manual

Thankfully, God didn't keep us in the dark about this important aspect of our lives. He gave us an instruction manual called the Torah, which gives us practical instruction. Holiness is not to be an abstract or mystical concept, but something we can apply to our everyday lives.



In a Hebraic context, holiness is not to be found in a life of renunciation such as that of a celibate monk or nun; but within our normal sphere of human relationships and every-day life. Even in simple, mundane matters, we may choose to **“do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.”** (Micah 6:8)

The Cohen Hagadol (the high priest) was instructed to wear a plate upon his forehead that bore the words ‘**Holy unto יהוה** (the Lord)’. With every movement, every scratch and sneeze, the jingle of this plate would remind him that He is to be holy. Even so, we are to remember, even when changing diapers, washing dishes or driving to work, that we are **“to be holy in all our conduct.”**

“But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy for I am holy.” (1Peter 1:15-16)

Although God called the nation of Israel to holiness first, He then extended this command to those who once were ‘*not a people*’ (‘**loh ami**’ in Hebrew), but who are now people of God through the blood of the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua.

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” (1Peter 2:9-10)

⁸ Hebrews 12:14

In rejecting the Torah, the Church has left the Body of Messiah floundering in some respects with how to live out, on a practical every-day basis, this issue of holiness. We must return to the Torah, especially the Ten Commandments, to re-discover God's standards of holiness rather than our own man-made idea of what constitutes a holy life.

The first command mentioned here is twofold: to honor one's mother and father, and to keep God's Sabbaths (shabbatot). The reason these two are given side by side, the rabbis explain, is that honoring one's parents is the first step towards maintaining good, earthly relations with our fellow man. And honoring the Sabbath is the first step in maintaining a good, spiritual relationship with God.

Yeshua answered likewise when asked, "Which is the greatest command?" He gave a two-fold answer: "**Love the Lord your God....and love your neighbor as yourself.**" (Mark 12:29-31) Yeshua did not teach outside the Torah, or even worse, abolish it. He helped to explain it to us more clearly. Yeshua observed and fulfilled the Torah.

We are commanded to keep God's Sabbath, not a man-made one. God instituted His Sabbath on the seventh day, not the first. Yeshua did not change the day – it was a human initiative by the Catholic Church which has been adopted also by the Protestant denominations. Let's return to keeping God's Sabbath, not our own substitute.⁹

In previous parashot, we have discussed keeping the Biblical dietary laws (kashrut);¹⁰ but this parashah contains a scripture which proves that keeping kashrut is not a matter of hygiene, but holiness.

"You shall therefore separate between the clean beast and the unclean, and between the unclean fowl and the clean; and ye shall not make your SOULS detestable by beast, or by fowl, ...which I have set apart for you to hold unclean." (Leviticus 20:25)

The Hebrew word used for soul is 'nefesh'. And the Hebrew words translated into 'clean and unclean' in English do not actually refer to cleanliness but to purity and impurity. Thus, God is dealing with us on a spiritual, not a physical level here through our diets.

Some say that the pig is now raised in such sanitary conditions that it is no longer the filthy, unclean, parasite-ridden beast it was in ancient times. The defilement that comes from eating these biblically prohibited animals, however, does not depend on their state of cleanliness, but rather upon the fact that God in His word has set them apart as 'impure', and that eating them will cause our 'nefesh' (soul) to become defiled.

⁹ See book, A Messianic Jewish View of the Sabbath, by the author, on website: www.voiceforisrael.net

¹⁰ See book, Kashrut, Biblical Dietary laws, by the author, on website: www.voiceforisrael.net

The Holiness Code

God explained (in what scholars call “the Holiness Code”) how people can be holy. God instructed the Israelites in 13 positive and 38 negative commandments in this parashah:

- To revere one’s father and mother
- To keep the Sabbath
- Not to turn to idolatry
- Not to make an idol
- Not to eat meat left over from sacrifices
- Not to reap a corner of one’s field, so that the poor may glean



[Gleaners](#) (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

- Not to steal, deceive or defraud
- Not to deny possession of something entrusted to you
- Not to swear in denial of a monetary claim
- Not to swear falsely in God's Name
- Not to withhold wages or fail to repay a debt
- Not to rob or defraud one's neighbor
- Not to delay payment of wages past the agreed time
- Not to curse any upstanding Jew
- Not to put a stumbling block before nor give harmful advice to a trusting person
- Not to pervert justice
- A judge must not respect the great man at the trial.
- Not to speak derogatorily of others, not to insult the deaf or impede the blind
- Not to stand idly by if someone's life is in danger
- Not to hate fellow Jew
- To reprove a sinner
- Not to embarrass others

- Not to take revenge
- Not to bear a grudge
- To love others as one loves oneself (Brotherly love is commanded in Leviticus 19:18 for one's "neighbor" and at Leviticus 19:34 for "strangers.")
- Not to crossbreed animals
- Not to plant diverse seeds together
- Not to eat fruit of a tree during its first three years
- The fourth year crops must be totally for holy purposes.
- Not to eat like a glutton or drink like a drunkard
- Not to be superstitious
- Not to engage in astrology
- Men must not shave the hair off the sides of their head.
- Men must not shave their beards with a razor.
- Not to tattoo or make cuttings in the skin
- To show reverence to the Temple
- Not to act as a medium, magical seer or sorcerer
- To honor those who teach and know Torah
- Not to commit injustice with scales and weights
- Not to curse one's father or mother
- Not to imitate idolaters in customs and clothing

The courts were required to carry out the death penalty for offences such as: insulting, striking or cursing a parent, offering a child to Molech, practicing sorcery, or sexual sins such as incest, homosexuality or bestiality.



Offering to Molech (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

We can see so many of these laws being disregarded in our day: disrespect towards parents, rebellion against authority, homosexuality and other sexual perversions, abortion, corruption in business, injustice, and the profaning of the Sabbath are becoming more and more commonplace. Is it any wonder that God's judgments are falling upon the nations of the earth?

Holiness in Commerce

Parashah K'doshim discusses, among other issues, the connection between holiness and integrity in commerce.

Corruption in business is, unfortunately, a huge problem in Israel where so many people live below the poverty line and struggle to survive financially.



A man praying at the Kotel with his tallit and tefillin

The people of God are instructed not to follow the immoral or unjust codes of the pagan nations around them, but rather to deal honestly in all business affairs.

"You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another." (Leviticus 19:11)

Most of us have an expectation that a religiously observant person is going to conduct himself with a higher standard of morality and integrity than a secular person – one without God's laws as a guide – but such is not always the case.

Shortly after coming back to Israel, I set out to buy a second-hand car without knowing much about the process. The man selling the car wore a kippah (head covering) and tzitzit (fringes), identifying himself as a religious Jew. His wife also wore a head-covering – an outward indication of an Orthodox Jewish woman. She even showed me photos of all her many children on her cell phone. I thought we were good people carrying out an honest business transaction that would be a blessing to both of us.

The car, however, turned out to be a complete lemon! In fact, even as the man took the money and walked away, the car would not move into gear (yes, it did work when I test drove it). In the first month, the car needed a complete overhaul including a new motor and transmission, costing several thousand shekels in repairs; and yet it still died an untimely death on the side of the road shortly after.

Despite all attempts to contact the man who sold me the vehicle, he remained unavailable. His cell phone had been disconnected. Obviously he had dealt deceitfully, even while knowing me to be a single mother in Israel and a covenant sister through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Torah says, "**You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him.**" (Leviticus 19:13) A believer who deals deceitfully with others profanes the name of the Lord. He damages not only his own reputation but also that of Adonai whom he represents. The word 'profane', meaning 'common or ordinary' is the opposite of 'holy' which means to be 'set apart for sacred purposes'.

Beware the Occult

The scriptures emphasize a stern prohibition against practicing divination and sorcery.

"Neither shall ye practice divination, nor soothsaying." (Leviticus 19:26)

"Turn ye not unto the ghosts, nor unto familiar spirits; seek them not out, to be defiled by them." (Leviticus 19:31)

Today, we can all notice a rapid rise in people seeking their spirituality in the occult. We need only look at the tremendous popularity of the 'Harry Potter' series, to understand people's hunger and thirst for supernatural powers outside the realm of the kingdom of Light.

Most of this is done in complete ignorance of the serious danger of dabbling in séances, Ouija boards, psychics, astrology, etc.



This man in [Rhumsiki, Cameroon](#), attempts to tell the future by interpreting the changes in position of various objects as caused by a freshwater crab through the practice of [nggàm](#)

As Believers, we have been warned not to walk in the ways of the world, and not to imitate the heathens by consulting with psychics or fortune tellers.

"There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls upon the dead.

For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 18:10-13)

My eldest daughter attended a Jewish boarding school in Israel. She came home reporting a marked increase in the students' interest in the occult. Many were participating in séances and refused to listen to my daughter's warnings about their being an abomination to our God.

I have also seen this in some Christians. One day, while walking past a coffee shop in Canada, I noticed a large sign in the window announcing "Psychic readings – 90% accuracy". I determined to take courage and Bible in hand and to share with the management of the coffee shop that this is contrary to God's word. I asked to speak to the manager, and when I shared God's Word with her, she blanched and stared at me, open-mouthed. Why? She and all her staff were all Christians!



Storefront psychic fortune-teller in Boston

Unfortunately, by disregarding the Torah, Christians have not been taught God's standards. Some Believers dabble in astrology, call psychics, have Harry Potter books in their homes, and allow their children to play with Pokemon cards or watch demonic shows on television. By doing this, we are playing directly into the enemy's hands.

The Lord showed me through the video, The Lion King, that He (the King) will watch over us, as long as we are walking in His kingdom territory; but as soon as we cross over into 'enemy territory' (the land of dry elephant bones) we are in great danger. He may still supernaturally rescue us in His mercy, but we may pay a terrible price.



I encourage us to keep our lives free of any association with the occult (in all of its forms no matter how harmless they may appear); and to be very careful that these things do not enter our homes, lest they cause us to become defiled and make us open prey to the enemy.

The Fortune Teller by [Enrique Simonet](#) (1899)

Love One Another

Although there are many laws and commandments in the Torah which are for our good and designed to protect our holiness; the main command which it all boils down to is this one command as is written in this week's parashah,

“You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Leviticus 19:17- 18)

The great sage Hillel said of this commandment to love our neighbor, *“This is the entire Torah, the rest is commentary.”*



Hillel (sculpture at the [Knesset Menorah](#), Jerusalem)

Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah), as a Torah observant Jew, would have been well aware of these sayings; therefore we may not be surprised that his words merely repeat the Jewish sages that came before Him when he said,

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

The apostle Paul also said that love is the fulfillment of the entire Torah: **“Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the Torah.”** (Romans 13:10)

Some may be surprised to discover that the origin of ‘The Golden Rule’ (Do unto others as you would have them do unto you...) is found in Biblical Judaism. With all this emphasis on keeping the Torah and laws of holiness, this vital command about loving one another and not hating or bearing a grudge is one that sometimes gets overlooked.

Something that is happening today among some Torah observant, Sabbath keeping Messianic believers is such a counter swing to the *‘free grace gospel’* that at times, their love grows cold towards others. A critical, judgmental, hard-hearted attitude can sometimes creep into our lives when we forget the necessity of loving others as well as God; or when we allow the poison of bitterness to defile ourselves and those around us.

Forgiveness is so important to the health of our spiritual lives. Unforgiveness, bearing a grudge, or hating someone in our hearts leads only to death and destruction in the end.

I like what Dr. Daniel Botkin wrote in an issue of his bimonthly newsletter, Gates of Eden. ¹¹

¹¹ Write to [Gates of Eden](#), PO box 2257, East Peoria, IL 61611-0257 for free sample copy

Symbol and Substance

“All of the ‘shadows’ mentioned in Colossians 2;16 (diet, holy days, new moons, sabbaths) are important, but if we perform these symbolic actions without laying hold of the substance to which they are meant to point us, then we have missed God’s purpose for these things.

If our life is not characterized all year long by the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, what good does it do us to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread? If our heart is filled with the leaven of malice and wickedness all year long, what good does it do to abstain from eating leaven for one week every year?

If we behave like unclean beasts and birds of prey by biting and devouring each other, what good does it do us to abstain from eating the flesh of unclean animals?...

Imagine two churches. One is a typical Sunday-keeping church that has its Easter ham dinners. However, the people do this out of ignorance, not out of rebellion. They honestly do not know any better. They have some erroneous theology, but they have a genuine love for God and for one another, and it shows.

The other church keeps the 7th day Sabbath, the dietary laws, new moons, and Feasts. The people are very zealous and scrupulous about these things, but their hearts are filled with the leaven of malice and wickedness. They bite and devour one another. They do not love one another.

Which of these two churches is more offensive to God?

I am not minimizing Sabbaths, new moons, holy days, and dietary laws. I am maximizing the greater importance of laying hold of the substance of what these shadows are meant to teach us.

Too much time is spent bickering about the minute details of the shadows arguing over these things amounts to arguing about where the edge of the shadow ends....God is more concerned that we lay hold of the substance behind the shadow than He is about how meticulous we are about debatable details of the shadows.

We would do well to remember Aesop’s fable of the dog with the bone. The dog was on a small bridge crossing a stream. Seeing his own reflection, the dog thought it was another dog with a bone in its mouth. The dog wanted that bone, too, and barked to try to frighten the dog into dropping its one. Of course the dog’s own bone fell into the stream when he opened his mouth to bark. The moral of the story? Beware that you not lose the substance by grasping at the shadows.”

The apostle Paul wrote about the important of love another way:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing...” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

As the Church wakes up to its Biblical, Hebraic roots, and seeks to re-discover God’s standards of holiness, let us not forget that if we do all these ‘holy things’ without love, then we are actually nothing at all.

At a pro-life conference in Israel, someone spoke of a scripture that, several years later, God would again bring to my awareness but with a new understanding. It speaks of Yeshua as the Mediator of the new covenant, and the *‘blood of sprinkling’ that speaks better things than that of Abel.*” (Hebrews 12:24)

What does this mean? When Cain murdered Abel, his own brother, out of his sinful, uncontrolled anger and jealousy, God said, **“The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.”** (Genesis 4:10)

For what does the blood of Abel cry out? It cries out to God for vengeance, judgment, retribution, and punishment! The blood of sprinkling refers to the sacrificial blood that Aaron and his sons would sprinkle around the altar to make atonement for the sins of the nation of Israel. (Leviticus 1:5) This verse says that the blood of sprinkling of Yeshua speaks better things than that of Abel’s.

Yeshua’s blood cries out from the cross, not for vengeance and judgment and punishment but for mercy, grace, undeserved forgiveness! It is almost beyond our comprehension, but when someone sins against us - when someone hurts us deeply - it is only by hearing Yeshua cry out on the cross, *“Father forgive them!”* that we may also have the grace to forgive.

On our High Holy Horses

Oh, how easy it is to keep our focus on the speck in our brother (or sister’s) eye, and totally ignore the plank in our own ¹² – especially when it comes to the issue of personal holiness. Recently, I listened to an excellent message from the King of Kings Assembly in Jerusalem about the issue of holiness.

It was such a great message! The leader spoke about how God has set us apart to be distinct from the world; that our standard of ethics, behavior, morality, cannot be

¹² Matthew 7:3

compared to other people's, but must stand up to the Word of God and the example that Yeshua left for us. This is our standard of holiness. For without holiness, we will not see the Lord. Whew! I was fired up and on my high horse about holiness.

That night, my (then) husband unfortunately picked the wrong time to watch a 'questionable' movie with my (then) teenage son. Usually I would turn a blind eye – go to bed or occupy myself with something else in another room in order to keep the peace. But not this night. Nope, I sat right there listening to every curse word and watching every instance of violence for the sake of male 'entertainment' until finally I had enough – more than enough! I said that as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord! We will be holy people! And that this kind of filth will not be shown in my home!

I was on a roll. I was right. I was fashioning my whip and turning over the tables. If I had an axe, I probably would have smashed the T.V. screen (actually the big screen computer monitor which was my husband's pride and joy). To say that I was mad would be a severe understatement. O.K. they turned it off but with great resentment. They felt that '*boys will be boys*' and that I just don't understand men. I felt that they were not right with God for desiring this kind of cheap entertainment and that watching violence for a thrill defiles our souls as much as does pornography.

That same night, I went out to a class I had signed up for on anger management. It was an emotion that I found difficult to manage once I faced the challenges of being a wife and mother. Can anyone relate? On the way to the class, I listened to the rest of the message from King of Kings on holiness.

Now the pastor was talking about sin as anything which controls us other than God; and that we cannot serve two masters. This fiery preacher didn't mince words - he squarely addressed the issues of addictions: smoking, alcohol, drugs, caffeine, sexual immorality, even masturbation. Since I was still enjoying my illusion of self righteousness, I didn't immediately clue in that the Holy Spirit was speaking to me.

I still gloated over all my husband's sins – all the specks in his eye, so easily visible to my sight; but I still failed to see my own. This continued until I finally woke up to the realization that I was allowing anger to control me, therefore I was sinning in my anger.

The Word of God clearly says, **“Be angry, and do not sin”; do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil...let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Messiah forgave you.”** (Ephesians 4:26-32)

I wanted to deal with my husband, but the Spirit of God wanted to deal with me! How about you? Are you sitting on some high horse right now, looking down your nose at someone else for their breaches of holiness?

May we each receive the grace to look at our own sins, to repent, and turn away from them. **“He who covers his sins will not succeed, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”** (Proverbs 28:13) Amen v’amen.

Dangerous Compromise – Kackie and other word pictures

It seems to me that one of the great enemies of living a holy life is compromise. Looking at the level of compromise in our lives is part of the self-judgment that we must do on a daily basis; but also especially during the days leading up to Feast of Trumpets (Yom Zikaron Tru’ah), when we hear the shofar alarm call of God, and during Yom Kippur, Day of Atonement.

This is a time of self-examination, introspection, and t’shuvah (repentance). After being cleansed by the blood of the Lamb at our salvation and filled with the Holy Spirit, we begin to walk out the process of sanctification – becoming holy/kadosh/set apart for God. It is a lifetime process that the Holy Spirit leads and guides us through until that final day when we meet the Lord.

Most of us don’t suddenly plunge into the abyss of gross sin. Usually we descend into the miry pit gradually, step by carnal step; and it is through compromises that we lose our ‘holiness edge’. A little here, a little there and before we know we, we are no longer ‘tahor’ (pure) but tameh (defiled) once again. “It is the little foxes that spoil the vine.”¹³

The Holy Spirit showed me this as a word picture one day while walking my dog, Pepper. Our apartment complex had become more strict about picking up after the mess our dog leaves on the grounds¹⁴. But still, there were many who disregarded the posted signs and warnings, leaving the grounds a disgusting mess.

It was for this reason that I preferred to walk Pepper at the off-leash area in the dog park where he had more room to run in the bushes and play with the other dogs. I noticed, however, a disturbing trend in myself: at certain times, I didn’t want to pick up Pepper’s ‘kackie’ (let’s use the Hebrew word here).



Pepper

¹³ Song of Solomon 2:15

¹⁴ This was while living in Canada. In Israel, on the moshav (village) almost no one picks up after their dog

I don't want to be indelicate but I don't know how else to get the word picture across as the Lord showed it to me. Perhaps those who are overly sensitive or easily offended may be advised to skip this part☺. The thing is, if Pepper left a substantial 'mess', then of course as a responsible dog owner, I would pull out the baggie, pick it up and throw it away. But if Pepper left a small, almost unnoticeable 'kackie', then my tendency was to want to ignore it and leave it there.

Here's how my carnal thinking went, *"Oh, that is such a small piece of kackie; it's just not worth the trouble of pulling out the bag."* Or how about this: *"Look at all the many other piles of 'kackie' lying around. If all those people can leave their dog's mess, why can't I? Why do I have to be the only one who cleans up after their dog? In this mess, the little bit that I pick up won't even make a difference."* Or how about this 'Jewish' one: *"I don't want to waste a good bag on such a little bit."* ☺

Sometimes Pepper does me the favor of doing his business in the deep grass or bushes. Then I think, *"Oh, good, no one will ever see this one."* When one of the kids calls me on this, I just brush them off, *"It's fertilizer"*, I rationalize.

Aren't we so much like this with little sins? It's not a great big huge sin, so we think it's not worth the trouble to go through repenting and covering it with the blood of Yeshua. Or we think that since 'everyone else is doing it', it couldn't be that bad – that in the darkness of this world, our little light won't make a difference.

Then there are the sins that we hide, thinking that since they are done in secret and we didn't get caught, then we don't have to deal with it. But over time, these little sins, little areas of compromise, these little bits of 'kackie' add up to cause big defilement. Even the ones dumped in the deep bushes will still come to light in the Day of Judgment.

So let's deal with them all through repentance and the blood of Yeshua. As we prepare to celebrate Shavuot (Feast of Weeks/Pentecost), traditionally known as the time of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, as well as the giving of the Holy Spirit to the apostles, let us keep both grace and truth in mind.

Torah without the Spirit of God leads to death, not holiness. And living by the Spirit, without the foundation of the Torah's instructions on holiness may lead to deception.

"And ye shall be holy (k'doshim) unto Me; for I יהוה am holy (kadosh), and have set you apart from the peoples, that ye should be Mine." (Leviticus 20:26)

Haftorah K'doshim (Amos 9:7-15)

The Prophet Amos proclaimed the downfall of the Kingdom of Israel by their rejection of God's laws of righteousness. They failed the holiness test; just as have so many of us....

Is there any hope for us who have failed, who have sinned - who have been tested and found wanting in the holiness department? Yes, yes, and again yes! Take heart, fellow 'holiness - handicapped' God-seekers.

We serve a God whose heart longs to restore that which has fallen, repair what's been broken and re-build that which has been ruined.

The ancient Hebrew prophet, Amos, spoke about God re-building the Tabernacle of David: **“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up his ruins, and I will built it as in the days of old...”** (Amos 9:11)

In looking through an old journal, I read a poem written by Bill Gaither:

Something beautiful, something good;
All my confusion He understood,
All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife.
But He made something beautiful out of my life.



[Amos](#) (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

I wrote down this poem, by faith, in July 2009, when I sat in the ashes and ruins of my life. My marriage had failed and I languished in exile in Canada. Now my children and I are back in the Land and are beginning to see glimpses of God's merciful restoration – as in the days of old.

Israel stands as a sign to the nations – but it may also act as a personal witness to each of us – that God restores that which has fallen. When we feel that we have fallen so short of the glory of God that we can't even look up; when condemnation and despair causes us to drag our heavy selves through the day – look to Israel for hope.

Even our Israeli national anthem is called Hatikvah – the Hope. It is not only about Israel's hope – it is about hope in God for the nations – and for each one of us.



Hebrew Lyrics to Hatikvah

Who has fallen? What has been broken in our life? Ruined? God can lift us up out of the ash heap, heal our broken hearts, bind up our wounds and restore us in a way that we will be better off than before. He will give us beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning – a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness¹⁵ – we must just stay in faith!

The nation of Israel stands as a sign of His greatest miracle! God promises to restore His people.



Tsora Vineyard in the Judean Hills

“They shall rebuild ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine; they shall till gardens and eat their fruits. And I will plant them upon their soil, nevermore to be uprooted from the soil I have given them.” (Amos 9:14-15)

Israel is like the eldest child in the family. She is cherished and adored by her parents. Until one day, another child is added to the family – and then another and another....and she must share the love of her parents. She feels rejected, jealous, no longer special – but then hopefully the child grows up and matures. She comes to understand that she still has a special place in the hearts of her parents, even as her siblings do.

Israel also needs to come to understand that she can share her ‘special relationship with God’ with others who want to come into covenant with the God of Israel through Yeshua. He said, **“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”** (John 10:16)¹⁶ God promises to restore the ‘fallen booth (tabernacle/sukkah) of David’. In Hebrew, this is **‘Sukkat David hanofelet’** (Amos 9:11).

A sukkah is the most fragile and temporary of structures. We build it as a makeshift shelter to dwell in for sukkot (Feast of Booths/Tabernacles). A sukkah proclaims that we are only temporary residents on earth; and that Heaven is our true home where we are headed. Dwelling in a sukkah re-enacts our dependency on God as our source for all our needs.



A sukkah built by the children of Makor Hatikvah (Messianic believers school in Jerusalem)

¹⁵ Isaiah 61:3

¹⁶ See DVD Unity in the Messiah - One Flock and One Shepherd, www.voiceforisrael.net

Sukkot is the only biblical holiday on which Israel offered sacrifices on behalf of all the other nations. When the Lord returns and defeats all the nations that come against Jerusalem, all the survivors of those nations will be required to come and celebrate Sukkot.¹⁷ (Zechariah 14).

Therefore, although God calls Israel to be a set apart (kadosh/holy) people from out of all the nations of the earth, this reflects Israel's infancy – when she was an 'only child'.

Now, we as Israel, and especially the Messianic Jewish community, need to grow up to share our place in the Covenants with all those who come to God through faith in Yeshua Hamshiach (the Messiah).

Together, in unity as one flock, with the help of our One Good Shepherd,¹⁸ we can join with one another to build the fallen sukkah of David and dwell within it together in peace (Shalom).



Building a family sukkah

K'doshim Study Questions

1. What is the meaning of the word 'holy' (kadosh) in a Hebraic context?
2. Is there any way that you feel God has called you to be 'holy' that doesn't look quite holy to others? Share.
3. Do you agree with the things we have defined that holiness is not? Discuss.
4. Has this parashah changed your ideas or perception about holiness?
5. Were there any laws that you learned about in the Holiness code that were new to you or surprised you? How do you feel about tattoos? Other issues mentioned here?
6. Have you ever been cheated in business dealing? How did this make you feel? If you are a business owner do you feel God is calling you to a higher standard of integrity?
7. Have you ever been (or are you now) involved in aspects of the occult? Have you received deliverance prayer?
8. Have you noticed congregations where its members seem focused on the minute details of the Torah but less focused on loving one another?
9. What do you think about the comparison of the two churches and the author's implication of which one is more pleasing to God? Do you agree? Why or why not. Discuss.
10. Are there areas of compromise in your life which you need to address?
11. Why is self-righteousness so dangerous?
12. How does Israel stand as a personal sign of hope for each one of us?

About the Author:

Hannah Neshher grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

If you appreciate these teachings, your donations are greatly appreciated. It is through your generous financial and prayer support that we can continue to send the Word forth from Zion and Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3).

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