



## **Kedoshim**

VaYikra (Leviticus) 19:1 - 20:27

Parsha Kedoshim continues the transition that we have followed in this section of the book of VaYikra, from a work primarily directed toward the Kohanim, to one intended for the ordinary Israelite. The people of Israel were to be holy, because G-d is holy. That is the reason and the justification for a series of ethical, ritual and religious rules that comprise this and the following parshiyot in YaYikra. Whereas we might distinguish between the different types of Mitzvot, in Judaism they are all equal, and all equally binding. The people are to observe the commandments and the laws of the sacrifices. They are to provide for the poor and the stranger; leaving the edges of the fields unharvested and the fallen fruits of their vineyards uncleaned, so that the needy could come and gather food.

One of the best-known and most beloved verses in the Torah is found in Kedoshim. "V'Ahavta L'rayecha Kamocha ...You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (19:18). According to Rabbi Akiba, one of the greatest Rabbis of the period of the Mishnah, this is the greatest teaching in the entire Torah. Indeed, the idea that we all have responsibilities to all people, and the idea that there can be no service to G-d while simultaneously practicing cruelty to others, is one of Judaism's greatest gifts to the world.

Kedoshim warns against insulting the deaf or placing a stumbling block before the blind. Respect and deference must be shown for the elderly. The people were instructed to be fair in judgment and in commerce, and to not bear a grudge.



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