

## Consecrate Yourself by Honoring Your Parents

This weeks reading is from Parsahat Kedoshim (*Vayikra / Leviticus 19:1-20:27*) the Lord spoke to Moshe saying we are to be holy (*19:1-2*), we are to honor our father and mother and not turn to idols or molten gods (*19:3-4*). We are told not to steal, not to swear falsely, not to slander others, and not to hate your neighbor or brother (*19:11-17*). We are commanded not to practice divination or soothsaying (*19:26*), do not make tattoos or marks on yourself (*19:28*), do not turn to mediums or spiritists (*19:31*). We are to keep the Shabbat (*19:30*), do not do wrong to the stranger in the land (*19:33-34*), and keep correct weights and measures (*19:35-37*). The Lord God states we are not to give our sons or daughters as a sacrifice to false gods (*20:1-4*). We are to consecrate ourselves and be holy for our God is holy (*20:7*). It is written that anyone who curses his mother or father is to be put to death (*20:9*), if one commits adultery with another man's wife he is to be put to death (*20:8*), if a man lays with his father's wife, daughter in law, incest, etc he is to be put to death (*20:9-12*), if a man lays with another man (Homosexuality) they are to be put to death and their blood is upon them (*20:12*). The Scriptures say if a man lays with an animal he is to be put to death (*20:15*) and the same for a woman who approaches any animal (*20:16*). The reason for these commands Scripture says is because *20:23* "... you shall not follow the customs of the nation which I will drive out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I have abhorred them." (NASB) Generally speaking, why do you think these commands are placed side-by-side, to be holy, to fear our parents, to obey the Shabbat, not turn to idols, the peace offering, and the profaning the holy thing and the name of the Lord?

### ספר ויקרא פרק יט Vayikra / Leviticus 19:1-8

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב  
 דַּבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ  
 רַחֲמֵי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם קְדוּשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי  
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ג אִישׁ אָמוּ וְאָבִיו  
 תִירָאוּ וְאֶת-שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה  
 אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ד אַל-תִּפְגְּנוּ אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים  
 וְאֵלֵי מִסְכָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה  
 אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ה וְכִי תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים  
 לַיהוָה לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם תִּזְבְּחֶהוּ: ו בַּיּוֹם זָבַח  
 חֲקָם יֹאכַל וּמִמָּחָרֹת וְהַיּוֹמָה עַד-יוֹם  
 הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בָאֵשׁ יִשְׂרָף: ז וְאִם הָאֵכָל  
 יֹאכַל בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי פְגוּל הוּא לֹא  
 יִרְצָה: ח וְאִכְלוּ עוֹנוֹ יִשָּׂא כִּי-אֶת-  
 קֹדֶשׁ יְהוָה חָלַל וְנִכְרַתָּה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא  
 מֵעַמִּיהָ:

19:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 19:2 'Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. 19:3 'Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father, and you shall keep My sabbaths; I am the Lord your God. 19:4 'Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods; I am the Lord your God. 19:5 'Now when you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the Lord, you shall offer it so that you may be accepted. 19:6 'It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and the next day; but what remains until the third day shall be burned with fire. 19:7 'So if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an offense; it will not be accepted. 19:8 'Everyone who eats it will bear his iniquity, for he has profaned the holy thing of the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from his people. (NASB)

When studying this week's reading it quickly becomes apparent that there are good number of commandments found within Parashat Kedoshim. According to Rambam's Mishneh Torah, contained within the Torah are 613 commandments which is said to be incumbent upon us at all times. These 613 commandments may be divided into 248 positive commands, and the remaining 365 are considered to be negative commands. It is interesting that in Parashat Kedoshim, we find both the positive and negative commands are in fact mixed together for example, the command to honor your mother and father, and to keep the Shabbat are positive commands, whereas do not turn to idols/molten images are negative commands. The question is "*what is the purpose of the order and/or placement of the commandments in this particular Parashah?*" The rabbis according to Midrash Rabbah Vayikra, Parashat 24, Part 5 (מדרש רבה ויקרא פרשה כד) (סימן ה) make the observation that this Parashah was spoken in the presence of the entire congregation (assembly) of people because it contained the most essential principles of the Torah (i.e. *the Ten Commandments*). They divide the Torah Portion in this manner:

1. *I am the Lord your God (Shemot / Exodus 20:2) and here it is written, I am the Lord your God (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:4);*
2. *You will have no other gods (Shemot / Exodus 20:3) and here it is written, Nor make to yourselves molten gods (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:4);*
3. *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain (Shemot / Exodus 20:7), and here it is written, And you shall not swear by My name falsely (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:12);*
4. *Remember the Shabbat day (Shemot / Exodus 20:8) and here it is written, You shall keep my Sabbaths (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:3);*
5. *Honor your father and your mother (Shemot / Exodus 20:12) and here it is written, you shall fear every man his mother and his father (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:3);*
6. *You shall not murder (Shemot / Exodus 20:13) and here it is written, Neither shall you stand idly by the blood of your neighbor (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:16);*
7. *You shall not commit adultery (Shemot / Exodus 20:13) and here it is written both an adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death (Vayikra / Leviticus 20:10);*
8. *You shall not steal (Shemot / Exodus 20:13) and here it is written, You shall not steal (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:11);*
9. *You shall not bear false witness (Shemot / Exodus 20:13) and here it is written, You shall not go up and down as a talebearer (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:16);*
10. *You shall not covet any thing that is your neighbors (Shemot / Exodus 20:14) and here it is written, You shall love your neighbor as yourself*

*(Vayikra / Leviticus 19:18).*

The rabbis from Midrash Rabbah Vayikra, Parashah 24, Part 6 (מדרש רבה ויקרא פרשה) (כד סימן ו) state that the reason for this particular ordering of the commandments is for the purpose of building a fence around one's self against immorality so as to keep one's self holy before God. The question though is why are these commands are placed side-by-side, to be holy, to fear our parents, to obey the Shabbat, not turn to idols, the peace offering, and the profaning the holy thing and the name of the Lord? One interpretation may be found regarding *Vayikra / Leviticus 19:1-3*, immediately following the command to be holy, we are told to fear our mother and father. Yeshua also seems to bring this topic up while discussing the Pharisees and Scribes of his time regarding the traditions of the rabbis.

***Matthew 15:1-6***

*15:1 Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 15:2 'Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' 15:3 And He answered and said to them, 'Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 15:4 'For God said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.' 15:5 'But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God, 15:6 he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. (NASB)*

It is important to note that the command to fear mother and father, is from the fifth commandment, one from among the ten (*Aseret Hadiberot*) that were given Moshe on the mountain of Sinai on the two stone tablets. Looking at the commandments, the fifth commandment (to honor mother and father) marks a transition between the commands that are related to our relationship with God verses those that are related to our relationship with others. According to *Shemot / Exodus 20:12*, we read יב כִּבֵּד אֶת-אָבִיךָ וְאֶת-אִמְךָ וְאֵת-אֱמֹךָ 20:12 *'Honor your father and your mother; that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you. (NASB)* Here the word for “honor” is translated from the word “kaved” (כִּבֵּד) derived from the root word meaning “weighty.” In the Scriptures there are many instances where this word is used to refer to the glory of God. Notice how the first four verses refer to the glory of God and honoring the Lord God Himself. By honoring mother and father we honor the Lord God Himself. Parents were instrumental in the creation/birth of the baby, they are the caregiver and teacher of their children, and therefore they represent an important aspect in being representatives of the Lord God Almighty. The family unit is also designed to represent the relationship the Lord has with each of us. It is through this relationship that we truly understand our identity, within our families, our community,

and in the Messiah. Note that this appears to be the theme to the commands in Parashat Kedoshim which speak of our father and mother, murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, coveting, sexual impurities, and how to relate to our neighbors. Just as we honor our mother and father (*Ephesians 6:1-3*), we understand that we are also to honor the other members of our family (*Romans 12:10*), and that the Lord God is our Heavenly Father (*1 Timothy 6:6*), we are in like manner demonstrating our love for Him by demonstrating respect towards others. The rabbis have the concept with regard to sowing and reaping on the idea that God rewards “*measure for measure*” (מדה כנגד מדה, middah k’neged middah) even to the smallest detail. The rabbis say that “*all measures of punishment and reward taken by the Holy One blessed be He, are in accordance to the principle of ‘measure for measure’*” (*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 90a, Sota 8b, Midrash Rabba Genesis 9:11, 94:10, Exodus 1:18, 9:10, 10:6, Numbers 10:1-2, 14:6, and Song of songs 3:6, etc*). The commandment says to honor your parents is long life and disrespecting your parents results in judgement from the Lord that may even result in a shortened life. In Ephesians the Apostle Paul quotes from the fifth commandment saying *6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 6:2 Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), 6:3 so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. (NASB)* The interesting thing is that when honoring your parents, one could expect a good life, however the Torah portion draws the other commands into context that being holy involves not only to fear our parents, but also to obey the Shabbat, not turn to idols, to following the Word of God even in the details with the example given of the peace offering, and thus one will not profane the holy thing and will sanctify the name of the Lord in his or her life. The point is that one does not obey one command to neglect another and assume all is fine. The Lord says *20:23 “... you shall not follow the customs of the nation which I will drive out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I have abhorred them.” (NASB)* and the reason being is we are to consecrate ourselves as holy for our God is holy (*20:7*). This is a similar principle to what Peter said in *1 Peter 2:12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (ESV)* If we behaved according to the customs of the nations as they are being described based on the commandments, would this be keeping our conduct honorable? The point of keeping our conduct honorable before others is for the purpose of honoring God in our lives, this takes us right back to the concept of “*middah k’neged middah*” and the command to honor our parents. In order to keep our conduct honorable before God we have to make specific plans to succeed. Some action plans include the following: yield to God’s power in your life (*James 4:7*), every day commit yourself to put the flesh to death (*Romans 6:11-12*), decide to be holy every day (*Job 31:1*), guard your heart always by being aware of temptations and where your weak points are (*1 Timothy 6:11*), be conscious of your thoughts (*2 Corinthians 10:5*), live a life with accountability (*Ephesians 5:8-11*), get rid of all our grudges, resentments and lack of forgiveness, and fill your mind with God’s word (*Philippians 4:8*), guard your eyes (*Job 31:1*), and try to develop good “*holy*” habits and never give up trying to honor God according to His word. With God’s help, all of these things are possible in the Messiah Yeshua and the power of Holy Spirit in our lives. Praise the Lord!