

Treasures of the Torah

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,
46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value,
he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
Matthew 13:45*

‘Pleasing unto the Lord’



29th April 2023

8 Iyyar 5783

Double portion

Acharei Mot (After the death of) – Kedoshim (Holy Ones)

Leviticus 16:1- 20:27

Shabbat Shalom Talmadim,

Blessings for a great Shabbat, and for the week ahead. From Shabbat to Shabbat may the name of the Lord be praised.

This week’s parsha begins with the Lord speaking to Moses, instructing him to tell Aaron that he must not enter into the Holy place when he wants. YHVH warns Moses that Aaron must obey this instruction because he will die as the presence of the Lord will appear over the ark.

Acharie Mot means ‘After the death’, and once again we see that the title only relates to the first two lines. It reminds us of the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, Aaron’s sons.

Leviticus 10:1-2 But Nadav and Avihu, sons of Aharon, each took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and offered unauthorised fire before Adonai, something he had not ordered them to do. 2 At this, fire came forth from the presence of Adonai and consumed them, so that they died in the presence of Adonai.

The Parsha begins:

16 Adonai spoke with Moshe after the death of Aharon’s two sons, when they tried to sacrifice before Adonai and died; **2** Adonai said to Moshe, “Tell your brother Aharon not to come at just any time into the Holy Place beyond the curtain, in front of the ark-cover which is on the ark, so that he will not die; because I appear in the cloud over the ark-cover.

3 *“Here is how Aharon is to enter the Holy Place: with a young bull as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering. 4 He is to put on the holy linen tunic, have the linen shorts next to his bare flesh, have the linen sash wrapped around him, and be wearing the linen turban — they are the holy garments. He is to bathe his body in water and put them on.*

The emphasis in the second paragraph of the text focuses on the garments that Aaron must wear. We have already studied extensively upon the priestly garments in Exodus. In addition, we observe the ritual of the Bull which is a burnt offering for Aaron and his household, a slaughtered goat to serve as a purification offering for the people and the sending out of a second designed goat which carries the transgressions of the people, into the wilderness.

In this Parsha, we will focus on the second portion, ‘Kedoshim’ (Holy Ones). Our attention is drawn to the sacrificial offerings of the heathens given to Molech. YHVH commands Israel to refrain from observing the rituals of all forms of cultic worship. These practices were embedded in the early Israelite culture.

We find that these deep religious roots permeate even today throughout the Christian faith. Ancestral worship, the veneration of saints and other cultic worship are still allowed so long as a person remains adherent to the overruling body. What we are witnessing today is the new imperial age of Rome having incredible power and influence in world matters.

We see in this Parsha a re-emphasis on the deviant sexual practices previously covered in Parsha Acharei Mot and the reiteration of the commandments especially upon the observance of the Sabbath and the veneration of the sanctuary. This reiteration compounds the importance of fidelity to the one true God. Impurity within the sex act and adultery are very powerful metaphors that help us to understand the importance and purity YHVH puts upon His devotion to His bride, who in return must reciprocate the same feelings for Him.

In addition to this idea, YHVH also draws our attention to how we worship Him and in particular our tendency to be drawn away from Him, and focus on idols and the many other forms of cultic worship.

In Parsha Kedoshim chapter 20, the subject of sacrificing infants to Molech is approached. Molech was considered to be an Ammonite deity and has its earlier mention in this passage in Leviticus.

I Kings 11, gives us the terrifying result of how YHVH broke the kingdom of Israel apart because of the infidelity of Solomon.

11 King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. 2 They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, “You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.” Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. 4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. 5 He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done. 7 On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. 8 He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods. 9 The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. 10 Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow

other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. 11 So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. 12 Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

It is hard to imagine how a man, chosen of God, and rich in wisdom could fall so greatly.

Solomon built and adorned the first temple. It was built to a pattern shown to His father David. It is beyond belief what this man built for the Lord. We read how even the glory of the Lord inhabited this beautiful and sacred space.

Yet, Solomon, despite his abundance and the favour of the Lord, got things so badly wrong. Solomon's heart had turned away from the Lord because his wives were from outside the tribes of Israel. Their own forms of worship to other gods influenced him. His wisdom had left him. We read a similar story in the book of Judges, of how Samson also left his Nazarite status and ignored the prohibitions given to Israel. His idolatry pushed the boundaries and he had forgotten how he had been set apart to YHVH.

My focus on this Parsha is to highlight the seriousness of breaking the prohibitions of Lord. These are given to us by His law. We must remember that these laws are not specifically given to restrain us per se but to keep us focused on living a holy life — in other words, the life we need to live if we are to receive the benefits of the covenant.

When we look back to the expulsion of the human beings from the Garden of Eden, we see that the Lord still loved His children. Though they had rejected His holiness, YHVH did not want them to be lost. Without some kind of rule, the humans, left to their own devices, would be in great danger. If they could be given some guidelines and were able to stick to them, there would be hope of salvation.

If the humans could obey the rules, their redemption would be in their grasp. We have to understand that destroying the whole world and beginning again would mean destroying those He loved. This gives us insight into why YHVH refrains from such greater judgement upon the wicked. His wrath is held up to the very end. He knows then that the time will come when He can save His bride. In the meantime, she must show her absolute devotion to Him and go through many trials.

Our next Parsha, Emor, continues the themes of worship and holiness. However, as we conclude this insight, we must have no misunderstanding of how much YHVH loves His children. Such a Holy God demands that only that which is holy can enter into His presence. Observation of the law does not do this alone, neither do sacrifices do not do this alone. These are only ways to help us understand what we have to do in living a holy life - a divine manual for living. Prescriptive methods are religious routes. YHVH is not giving us this. We observe the laws because they themselves are holy, and that we love Him. We don't make up the divine laws because we are not holy. Only YHVH can give us these.

We have read how the moral and civil laws help us to look after each other. Putting these alongside the deep love we have for the Most High, we fulfill the royal command - we observe all the commands of God. This brings us into true communion with Him.

In truth, beloved, we can only observe the law of God if we die to ourselves and live by the Holy Spirit, as Paul admonishes us in Galatians 2:20-21 and in chapter 5. We as believers of Messiah are brought into His crucifixion and we are baptized into Him. That makes it possible, that if have died with Him, then we can live a separate and holy life. If we find it difficult to live such a life then

it would be true to say that we have yet to undergo conversion and yield to its demands. This is something that needs to be addressed in the contemporary church.

Friends, we are seeing many types of profane and abominable practices prevailing in the contemporary church. Because we stand in church does not mean that everything is holy.

Let us read this passage in Haggai 2:11 *“This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Ask the priests what the law says: 12 If someone carries consecrated meat in the fold of their garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, olive oil or other food, does it become consecrated?’”*

The priests answered, “No.”

13 Then Haggai said, “If a person defiled by contact with a dead body touches one of these things, does it become defiled?”

“Yes,” the priests replied, “it becomes defiled.”

14 Then Haggai said, “‘So it is with this people and this nation in my sight,’ declares the Lord. ‘Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is defiled.’

Amos 2 has this to say concerning YHVH’s charge against a sinful nation and their reluctance to repent and turn back to the Lord.

6 Thus says the Lord,

“For three transgressions of Israel and for four (multiplied delinquencies)

I will not reverse its punishment or revoke My word concerning it,

Because they sell the righteous and innocent for silver

And the needy for the price of a pair of sandals.

7 “These who pant after (long to see) the dust of the earth on the head of the helpless [as sign of their grief and distress]

Also turn aside the way of the humble;

And a man and his father will go to the same [b]girl

So that My holy name is profaned.

8 “They stretch out beside every [pagan] altar on clothes taken in pledge [to secure a loan, disregarding God’s command],

And in the house of their God [in contempt of Him] they frivolously drink the wine [which has been] taken from those who have been fined.

9 “Yet it was I [not the false gods] who destroyed the Amorite before them,

Though his height was like the height of the cedars,

And he was as strong as the oaks;

I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below.

10 “Also it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt,

And I led you forty years through the wilderness

That you might possess the land of the Amorite.

11 “Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets [who gave you My revelation],

And some of your young men to be Nazirites (dedicated ones).

Is this not true, O you children of Israel?” says the Lord.

12 “But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink [despite their vows]

And commanded the prophets, saying, ‘You shall not prophesy!’

We must grasp that the full measure of YHVH’s wrath is tempered with mercy and that all He wants is to see His people restored to Him.

That is the gospel message. All who will hear it and respond to this wonderful vision will reap a great reward in heaven. What greater thing can there be to be restored to the Father’s side?

Friends, some may argue that it is too difficult to observe the laws of God, and some further argue that we need not be so restricted as we have been given freedom in Christ. Do we argue then that Christ has given us carte blanche to live how we like and that we can even offer profane worship to a holy God? Did He give us liberty so that we can be liberal in all matters concerning the sanctity of His house? Do you believe that?

If we die to ourselves and live a resurrected life, the Lord will provide for us the means to live a holy life, and will fill our lives with such abundant blessings that we will be will not be able to count them. He will give us a new heart and transfer his blessings to our descendants.

Deuteronomy 10: 6 “And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants [that is, He will remove the desire to sin from your heart], so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, so that you may live [as a recipient of His blessing]. 7 The Lord your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who have persecuted you. 8 And you shall again listen to and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all His commandments which I command you today. 9 Then the Lord your God shall make you abundantly prosperous in everything that you do, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your land; for the Lord will again delight over you for good, just as He delighted over your fathers, 10 if you listen to and obey the voice of the Lord your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul (your entire being).

11 “For this commandment which I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it [c]out of reach. 12 It is not [a secret hidden] in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us and bring it to us, so that we may hear it and obey it?’ 13 Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us and bring it to us, so that we may hear it and obey it?’ 14 But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may obey it.

Choose Life

15 “Listen closely, I have set before you today life and prosperity (good), and death and adversity (evil); 16 in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk [that is, to live each and every day] in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments (precepts), so that you will live and multiply, and that the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to possess.

Finally, let us rest our thoughts upon this passage in 1 John 5.

2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Friends, if you are finding it difficult to live a life for Christ, then be reminded of the price He paid so that we could live for Him. He has not left us alone in this world but has given us the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth. The precious gift of faith has been given to us to help us live righteously. We have been given every spiritual blessing.

We do know what possibilities are ahead of us, so we can rest absolutely assured that the promises of God will overtake us.

Leviticus 22 ‘Therefore keep all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them, so that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out [as it did those before you].

23 You shall not follow the statutes (laws, practices, customs) of the nation which I am driving out before you; for they did all these things, and therefore I have loathed them.
24 But I have said to you, “You are to inherit and take possession of their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land [of plenty] flowing with milk and honey.” I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples (pagan nations). **25 You are therefore to make a distinction between the [ceremonially] clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves detestable by animal or by bird or by anything that crawls on the ground, which I have set apart from you as unclean.** **26 You are to be holy to Me; for I the Lord am holy, and have set you apart from the peoples (nations) to be Mine.**

Be blessed and walk in the light of His love and may this Shabbat bring harmony and peace to your week.
Until next time.



Numbers 6:

24 ‘Y’varekh’kha Adonai v’yishmerekha.

[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]

25 Ya’er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.

[May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favour.]

26 Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v’yasem l’kha shalom

[May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.]

Shabbat Shalom

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Additional reading: 1 Samuel 18:20-42, Mt 15:10-20

Glossary

Midrash: In Judaism, the **Midrash** is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (*Aggadah*) and occasionally the

Jewish religious laws (*halakha*), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (*Tanakh*)

Targum: **Targum Onkelos** (or **Onqelos**), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)

Targum Jonathan: **Targum Jonathan**, otherwise referred to as **Targum Yonasan/ Yonatan**, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10-220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

Talmud: The **Talmud** means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the **Babylonian Talmud** (*Talmud Bavli*), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;
2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.

Rashi, whose real name is Shlomo Yitzchaki was born in France in the 11th century. Rashi wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and commentary on the Hebrew Bible.

Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides became better known by the acronym Rambam. He was born in 1138 in Cordoba, Spain. He was a Sephardic Jew and influential philosopher. He is considered to be among the greatest of Torah Scholars.

Nachmanides- 13th century French Jewish Philosopher, commonly known by the acronym; Rambam.