



## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS  
RCA ISRAEL REGION

### ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM



#### 1ST ALIYA (VAYIKRA 16:1-24)

After the death of his 2 sons, Aaron is instructed to enter the Holy of Holies only through an elaborate process of offerings. He is to bring a private sin offering. And a communal sin offering of 2 identical goats, one as an offering, one sent to the wilderness, determined by lottery. The blood of both his offering and the communal shall be brought into the Holy of Holies, accompanied by incense. The smoke of the incense fills the Holy of Holies. The (scape) goat is sent to the wilderness. The people gain kapara, atonement.

The Torah outlines an elaborate ceremony of unique offerings in order for Aaron to enter the Holy of Holies, including the scapegoat ceremony and the incense offered in the Holy of Holies. And it is all performed by the Kohen Gadol.

However, the first verse indicates this was after the death of Aaron's 2 sons. But that was 3 parshiot ago, in Shemini. Why is there a break after their death for the sections of the laws of Kashrut and then the very detailed laws of Tuma of Tzaraat that took up the parshiot of Tazria and Metzora – and then indicate that this section is after their death? What is the thematic flow of these sections?

The central theme of the book of Vayikra is Kedusha, holiness. Holiness is the reach for the beyond, the reach for the Divine. The book begins with the reach for the Divine through

sacrifices because those are the most supercharged way of drawing near to G-d. They are brought in the place of G-d's dwelling, in the Mishkan. The bringing of sacrifices in the Mishkan is man approaching G-d in His Abode, a supercharged manner and place of expressing a desire to be near to Him.

Nadav and Avihu wanted to achieve an even higher pinnacle of approach to G-d; incense, the smoke symbol of G-d's Presence. Problem is, they were unauthorized.

The Torah needs to immediately respond and outline the drawing of parameters of how to draw near in this supercharged Mishkan..

So, it immediately outlines the complicated rules of Tuma, which restrict entry to the Mishkan.

And if the Mishkan is a supercharged place of approaching G-d, certainly the Holy of Holies is the pinnacle of nearness to G-d.

So, after outlining the rules and regulations for regular approach to G-d, the Torah outlines the even more elaborate rules and regulations for the approach to G-d in the Holy of Holies.



#### 2ND ALIYA (16:25-17:7)

This entire ceremony is done once a year on Yom Kippur, to gain atonement and purity. Tell the entire people: all sacrifices are to be brought to the Mikdash. The Cohen is to offer them, so they are pleasing. We are to no longer offer sacrifices to spirits.

Only at the end of the entire description of how one is to enter the Holy of Holies does the Torah tell us that this is to be done on Yom

Kippur. That is a powerful double layering of holiness; the holiest place and the holiest time.



### 3RD ALIYA (17:8-8:21)

Blood is not to be consumed, for life is in the blood. I have given it to you to use for atonement on the altar, not to consume. The blood of an undomesticated animal or bird that is killed for consumption, that blood is to be covered with earth. Do not do what the Egyptians or Canaanites do. Do My commands; and live. Sexual relations with relatives are forbidden: including spouses of parents, half siblings, grandchildren, aunts, in-laws. In addition, marrying 2 women who are closely related. Or a married woman.

The subject of entry into the Mikdash gives way now to the listing of forbidden marital relationships. These laws are entirely unrelated to the Mikdash.

But, as pointed out to me by my mechutan, Marty Lockshin, these forbidden relationships are described as causing Tuma, a familiar topic, and may result in the Land spitting you out. That is a parallel to the Mishkan. One who is Tamei may not enter the Mikdash. And one who defiles himself by forbidden sexual activity may not enter the Land of Israel. Well, it doesn't say it that way – it says the Land will not tolerate you, will vomit you out. In a word; the holiness of place demands purity. The holiness of the Mikdash. And the holiness of the Land of Israel.

And in this the Torah presents a radical notion; that holiness inheres not only in the holy place, the Mikdash. And not only in the holy time of Shabbat and holidays. But in the holiness of our relationships. Holiness is the central theme of Vayikra. Played out in the Mikdash, in offerings, in Tuma and its restrictions of entry into the holy place. But as well in the holiness of private life. Holiness is both

public and private, ritual and personal, related to the Holy One and to our fellow man. And this is the perfect segue to Parshat Kedoshim; holiness in daily life.



### 4TH ALIYA (8:22-19:14)

A man shall not lie with a man. Sexual relations with an animal are forbidden. These things (all the above) defile the land: it will spit you out. (Parshat Kedoshim) Be Holy, as I, G-d, your G-d is holy. Revere parents, keep Shabbat. Do not turn to idols or make graven gods. A shlamim offering may only be eaten for 2 days. Help the poor and stranger when harvesting a field by leaving dropped or forgotten produce or grapes. Don't steal, lie or swear falsely. Don't cheat; or tarry paying wages til the morning. Don't curse the deaf, trip up the blind.

This aliya begins Parshat Kedoshim, the best parsha in the Torah. Or at least Rashi says so on the first verse: most topics of the Torah are contained here. There are 51 mitzvot in 64 verses. We have left the topic of holiness of the Mikdash and focus on holiness in our behavior. These are the greatest themes of ethical behavior; helping the poor with dignity, honesty, care for employees, care for the deaf and blind. In just these few verses, our every moment of human interaction becomes meaningful; every step we take and thought we think needs vigilance. To be true. And kind. And give dignity to others. This parsha is the fullest expression of how holiness need inhere in our everyday treatment of others.



### 5TH ALIYA (19:15-32)

Do not pervert justice by favoring either poor or powerful. Don't spread gossip, nor stand by your brother's blood. Don't hate. Don't take revenge; love your neighbor as yourself. Do not interbreed animal, seeds, or wear wool and linen. In the

land, fruit is forbidden for the first 3 years of growth, 4th year holy, 5th year permissible. Do not use divination. Nor round the corners of your face or use a straight razor on your beard. Nor tattoo. Nor seek sorcery. Rise before the aged, glorify the wizened.

The mention of justice is a foil: in court, we pursue justice. But not on the streets. It is not our place to be judges; judges cannot favor one person over another. But we certainly can. And must. We must favor and help the victim. And revenge; we are not judges to mete out just revenge. If he didn't lend you, forget about it - you still should do the right thing and lend to him.



#### 6TH ALIYA (19:33-20:7)

Love the convert. Employ accurate weights and measures. One who gives their child to Molech shall be put to death. And if you don't do it, I will. The one who turns and follows sorcery, I will deal with them. Be holy; for I am Holy.

The convert may feel out of place, different, self-conscious, without family, not part of the crowd. Be extra sensitive to those who feel left out.

Accurate weights and measures would seem obvious. But the Torah is emphasizing that even when you can get away with it, don't. Like cursing the deaf. Who will ever know?



#### 7TH ALIYA (20:8-27)

The following receive the death penalty: cursing parents, the long list of forbidden sexual relationships listed above. Observing these laws and not those of the nations will prevent the Land from spitting you out, as it has done to those nations. Since I have distinguished you, it is you who shall possess the Land, the land flowing with milk and honey. And you shall distinguish between animals to be eaten and those not.

Be holy to Me and I will distinguish you to be My people.

The Jewish idea of ethical monotheism is on full display in Kedoshim. Holiness wanders seamlessly in the parsha from taking care of the poor, to laws of sacrifices, to honesty, to sexual prohibitions, to loving your neighbor, not hating; all under the rubric of holiness. Finding a pattern to the list of mitzvot in the parsha is challenging. But that is the point. There is no pattern. Because holiness wanders throughout our life, touching on the myriad pursuits of our day-to-day existence. It's all holy.

And we express this in the blessing we make over mitzvot – asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav. G-d makes us holy through His mitzvot. The mitzvot make us holy.

The parsha concludes: We are to be holy so that the Land does not spit us out. These words must give us pause, those of us privileged to walk the streets of our Land. The land could spit us out. All these mitzvot are not simply our own personal religious life. We, we who live in our Land, we particularly need to be extra vigilant in all these holy things, ritual, interpersonal, speech, care, love; for our success in this Land rests upon it.

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## HAFTORAH - AMOS 9:7-15 (ACCORDING TO THE ASHKENAZI CUSTOM)

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This week's haftorah speaks about exile and punishment that will be the result of the Jewish people straying from the path of the Torah.

Amos, the great prophet, brings a message from God in which he reminds the people of Israel of God's kindness and his love of his nation.

Although God is forced to punish the nation for their misdeeds, He will never completely destroy his nation. They will be sent into exile and unfortunately will find themselves in every

corner of the world - but the time will come when they will return to the land of their soul.

At that time the House of David will lead the nation and peace and prosperity will abound.

The conclusion of the haftorah resounds with the following uplifting message: "And I will return the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild desolate cities and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their produce." ■

STATS			
	Acharei Mot	Kedoshim	Total
of 54 Sedras	29th	30th	-
of 10 in Vayikra	6th	7th	-
Lines in a Torah	154	109	263
Rank	44th	49th	-
Parshiyot	15	4	19
Ptuchot	3	3	6
Stumot	12	1	13
Pesukim	80	64	144
Rank (Torah/Vayikra)	45/6	49/9	-
Words	1170	868	2038
Rank	43/6	49/9	-
Letters	4294	3229	7523
Rank	45/6	49/9	-

MITZVOT			
	Acharei Mot	Kedoshim	Total
Positive	2	13	15
Prohibitions	26	38	64
Total	28	51	79

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