



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

RAV KEHILLA, OHEL EPHRAIM IN NOFEI HASHEMESH
MAGGID SHIUR, DAF YOMI, OU.ORG
ROSH BAIS MEDRASH ENGLISH SPEAKING PROGRAM JCT MACHON LEV

Love Requires Boundaries

...ואהבת לרעך כמוך אני ה':

You must love your fellow as yourself; I am God. (Vayikra 19:18)

כְּאֶזְרַח מִכֶּם יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַגֵּר הַגֵּר אֲתִכֶּם, וְאַהֲבַתְּ לוֹ
כְּמוֹד כִּי־גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

The convert who dwells with you must be treated as a native among you, and you must love him as yourself, for you were strangers in Egypt; I am God, your God. (Vayikra 19:34)

MITZVOT TO LOVE

Parashat Kedoshim presents both the command to love our fellow Jew and the command to love the convert. The first is not framed merely as reciprocal kindness - to be nice because you want others to be nice to you. It is far stronger. It is an absolute, unconditional obligation.

The second directive is even more radical. Throughout history, societies have often treated the outsider with suspicion or contempt. Judaism insists on the opposite. The ger must

be welcomed, embraced, and loved. These two mitzvot portray Judaism not only as a religion of love of God, but as a religion that demands love of humanity.

CONTEXT OF THE MITZVOT

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks¹ asks a penetrating question: Why are these two commands found in Parashat Kedoshim in the nineteenth chapter of Vayikra, ? The chapter appears to present a puzzling mix of laws placed side-by-side. Some are moral: don't gossip, don't hate, don't take revenge. Others concern social justice: leave produce for the poor, don't withhold wages, don't cheat in business. And then a third group seems entirely different: don't crossbreed animals, don't plant mixed seeds, don't wear *shaatnez*, don't eat blood, don't eat fruit before its time.

STRUCTURE AND BOUNDARIES

At first glance, these laws seem totally unrelated. Some are about ethical behavior, some about economic fairness, and others about purity and ritual boundaries. Rabbi Sacks cleverly explains that they share a common theme: **they are all laws of order, limits, and boundaries.**

Hatred and revenge destroy relationships. Injustice erodes the trust on which society depends. Violating the integrity of nature leads to environmental and moral disarray.

1. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Judaism's Life Changing Ideas* p. 163-167.

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The Torah teaches that the universe has an underlying order, and when boundaries are ignored, chaos follows.

This is precisely why the commands to love appear here. Love flourishes only within structure. Parents who refuse to set limits may think they are being loving, but in truth they deprive their children of the tools needed to thrive. In life others may not be as sympathetic. So too in relationships between adults: healthy love requires clarity, respect, and boundaries.

The commands to love others and to love the convert are therefore placed intentionally in Parashat Kedoshim. They teach us that love is not a vague feeling and not simply “all you need.” True love requires discipline, structure and boundaries. Only then can it endure.

May we build relationships rooted in warmth but shaped by wisdom. Relationships where love is strong because boundaries are clear, and where our families, communities, and society are strengthened through the sacred discipline of genuine care. ■

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