

#29 Acharei Mot – #30 Kedoshim Leviticus 16:1-20:27

By Moshe Schwab

While Praying;

- * Hear God; reproduce God's glory in our lives; show His good ways.
- * Be stable and faithful in all you do.
- * No matter what issues we face, keep trusting God and be at peace; relax.
- * We can be attracted to lots of good things; Stand out in the areas God wants to use us.

Acharei Mot means "after the death." The Torah portion for Acharei Mot is Leviticus 16:1 to 18:30. Moshe is to tell Aharon after the death of his two sons that they are not to come just anytime into the holiest place behind the curtain. It then describes what the high priest must do, sacrifice, and wear. The Bible at times is very specific about what we are to do. We should have a deep respect for God and do what He says. The Bible says we are to fear Him, after all, He is the creator of the universe. Philippians 2:12-13 says we are to work out our rescue with fear and trembling (Rescue is a better rendering of the text there in Philippians than salvation; it is the Hebrew word מָלַט *mâlat* in the Old Testament portion.)¹.

Deuteronomy 6:2 NKJV says **we are to fear** God so we can have a prolonged life, "That you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and **that your days may be prolonged**. God's commands are good for us; they prolong our life. The reason we talk a lot about keeping God's commandments is because the Bible tells us over and over to keep God's commandments both in the Old and New portions.

No one is to be in the tent of meeting while the High Priest makes atonement for himself, his family, and all Israel. He is to lay hands on a goat confess the sins of Israel, and send it into the desert. Then the priest is to go back into the tent of meeting and make a sacrifice for the sins of the people. They are to take the bull and goat ashes and their remains outside the camp and finish burning them up. This is to be done every year on the tenth day of the seventh month (also known as Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement), and they were also to fast that day and it is to be a day of rest. The people were to only bring their sacrifices to the Cohanim (Priests). They were to no longer sacrifice to demons and those who do this or drink blood will be cut off from the community.

The life of creatures is in the blood and the blood sacrifices are to for our atonement. Leviticus 17:11 NKJV says, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." The Torah says that it is blood that makes atonement; Yeshua (Jesus) sacrificed His blood as the final atonement for sin. Yeshua the Messiah took away the sacrifices of bulls and goats and gave Himself as the final sacrifice for sin. So, we must believe in the Messiah Yeshua. Hebrews 10:4 NKJV says, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." ... ; then in Hebrews 10:9-10 NKJV, God, "He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Yeshua HaMashiach laid down His life for us.

This portion continues on; anyone who eats an animal that has died naturally must wash himself and his clothes. They were not to do what the Egyptians did or what the Canaanites did, but they were to do according to God's laws; a person will have life through God's commandments. Think about it. If they were good for God's people in the Old Testament, why wouldn't they be good for us now. **They were**

¹ "h4422. מָלַט *mâlat*; a primitive root; properly, to be smooth, i.e. (by implication) to escape (as if by slipperiness); causatively, to release or rescue; Strong's Enhanced Dictionary. The word salvation in the Old Testament uses the Hebrew word for escape or rescue. In other words, we have been rescued so we could do what is right; see the Hebrew word for saved in Joel 2:32 which quotes the New Testament.

intended to prolong our lives. People just want to make up excuses so they can do what they want. They won't make it into God's kingdom at the end of time. God is the judge and they are His commandments.

No one is to have sexual relations with any of their family or close relatives or a neighbor. No one is to have sexual relations with anyone, except a man and a woman as husband and wife. The laws about sexual sin are spelled out. Homosexuality is wrong and having sex with an animal is wrong. They were not to kill their children by offering them to a pagan god. The people of the land that God is expelling did these despicable things and that is why God is giving Israel the land. If Israel does these things, the land will vomit them out too. They were not to follow any of these abominable customs of the pagans it says. Rabbi Shaul (Paul) gives us a stern warning in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; the people who don't seek to do what is right and don't follow God's commandments will have no share in the Kingdom of God. Shaul mentions some of the sexual sins that our Torah portion mentions.

In this portion, Moshe gives instructions to Aharon about how He is conduct himself in the Mishkan (the Tabernacle) and more specifically at the time of Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement). We should always remember to come before God with respect and awe. Israel was not to do the despicable things that the Egyptians and Canaanites did. It was the reason that God was expelling the Canaanites from the land. We should also remember that not keeping God's laws can incur grievous circumstances. This portion says that the land will "vomit" out Israel if they end up doing these abominable things. Improper sexual practice is talked about in Leviticus 18 of this portion. Lands are destroyed because of wrong sexual practice. It perverts, degrades, and cheapens society. For example, people who practice these things perform sexual favors to get ahead. The people who should be honored for their merit are then passed by. Sexual sin treats people as objects instead of giving people the dignity and respect they deserve and also can lead to the sexual abuse of others.

Kedomshim means, "holy ones." The Torah portion for Kedoshim is Lev. 19:1 to 20:27. This portion begins with God telling Israel that they are to be a holy people, revere their parents, keep Shabbat, and not turn to idols. It tells us to be holy three times (Leviticus 19:2; 20:7, 26). Holiness is the act of separating yourself from sin. It is not a stamp of holiness as some say; we are to actually be holy. How ridiculous is it for some people to say they are holy and they are not actually acting holy. The peace offering is to be done in a certain way and when they get to the land, they are to leave the corners of their field for the poor and foreigner. They were not to steal, defraud others, not to swear by God's name falsely, not to keep back wages, not to curse a deaf person or put an obstacle (a stumbling block) in front of a blind person . They were to be just, not slander, look out for each other, not to hate or take revenge, and to love your neighbor as yourself. They were not to let their livestock mate with different species, not to mix their crops, and a specific command to not mix different kinds of thread for clothing.

In Leviticus 19:14 NKJV it says, "You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the LORD." There are a lot of things that this scripture can apply to. We shouldn't cause another person to sin because of our actions; we shouldn't be a stumbling block. For example, we should not offer alcohol to an alcoholic. Holding grudges instead of forgiving can lead to anger and unjust retribution. Yochanan (John) said that loving others includes not causing others to stumble and sin. "He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him;" 1 John 2:10 NKJV.

A man was to make reparation for sexual relations with another man's slave. They were not to eat from a newly planted tree until the fifth year; they were not eat blood; they were not to practice any spiritualism (like fortune telling or any curious arts; there are often devil spirits behind these activities), not to gash

their flesh, get tattoos, and not to make their daughter become a prostitute. They were to keep Shabbat, not to turn to mediums, respect the elderly, not to wrong foreigners, not to be dishonest with measurements, and keep to God's commands.

They were not to sacrifice their children to an idol and God will set Himself against those who consult a medium or sorcerer. They were to be holy and observe God's commands. They were not to curse their parents. A number of sexual sins are listed. adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and incest are all wrong. Men were not to have relations during a woman's period. These were the things that the people of the land were doing and the reason God was expelling them from the land. **God detested those works and the land would vomit them out if they did them.** They were to eat only clean animals and not make themselves detestable with unclean animals. They were to be set apart from sin (holy); they belonged to God. Mediums and sorcerers are to be put to death.

This portion talks about the many traps of sin that keep us from a relationship with God. For example, sexual sins often keep a person distant from God. We belong to God and we are to be a holy separate people (and not sin). Also, this portion talks about loving our neighbor as ourselves. Sin not only keeps us from God, but also keeps us from loving others and treating others right.

The Haftarah for Acharei Mot is Ezekiel 22:1-19. God will destroy the Negev and Jerusalem; The people of Israel have shed blood and made idols; and because of this, God has caused them to be scorned. They were using their power in order to kill others and to oppress others. They were committing perverted sexual acts and not keeping Shabbat. They were taking bribes and committing extortion. It says in this portion that God is going to deal with them and disperse them into other lands. God will pour out His fury on them.

This was a hard lesson for Israel and this should be a lesson for us; since we want to be God's people we should behave like God's people. Sin has a negative impact on us and others. For example, taking bribes subverts justice; those bribing others may get away with crimes against others. All sin is destructive and is wrong. Even small sins can cause harm.

The Haftarah for Kedoshim is Amos 9:7-15 (Ashkenazi Reading). In this portion, the Lord sees Israel's sins, but He will not completely destroy them. God will restore them and someday they will rebuild their cities. God will plant them and they will never again be uprooted. This is a picture of our restoring and good God.

People need to hear God and obey Him. There is so much of our society that has no qualms about what they do. Psalm 95:8-9 NKJV says, "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work." It's amazing isn't it. They saw God's great power, but some went astray. It's still true today. We have the Holy Spirit and have seen God's power, but people still want to do whatever they want. We need to stand strong and not sin.

Hebrews 3:12-14 NKJV

"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 'but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 'For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence **steadfast to the end.**'"

We are told to beware so that we don't sin because our sin can cause pain and destruction and separates us from God. We are to be steadfast to the end. Don't sin, hold on steadfastly. Why not hold fast to doing

what is right and good? Why not show others God's good ways instead of the pain and brokenness that comes from sin?

Be stable and faithful in all you do. Deuteronomy 10:12-13 NKJV, "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, **to walk in all His ways and to love Him**, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and **to keep the commandments** of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today **for your good.**" In Leviticus 19:18 NKJV it says, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD." Yeshua was quoting the Old Testament when He said to love God and your neighbor; as He does over and over. If the Old Testament was done away with as some say, they are saying His words are worthless.

Also, it was the practice of Rabbis to give two answers to questions; most informed people understand that this is what Yeshua was doing; He was acting as a Rabbi. Yeshua said the gate is narrow; the religious leaders of His time were following man-made commandments instead of God's commands from the Old Testament (see Matthew 15). Don't believe the religious leaders of our time who are telling us not to keep God's commandments. What does the Bible say over and over?

It is not much different now for people who have the help of the Holy Spirit. We are to still keep God's commandments, but we also have the Holy Spirit to help us. Hebrews 3:14 said we are to be "steadfast to the end!" The Holy Spirit is our helper to accomplish this. John 15:26 NKJV, "But when the Helper comes." John 16:7 NKJV says, "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you." Shaul (Paul) said, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are;" 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 NKJV. We are to be holy; being holy means we are to separate ourselves from sin. We are not to sin; and, we are to do that with the help of the Holy Spirit.

No matter what issues we face, keep trusting God and be at peace; relax. If we are on good terms with God, we have nothing to worry about even if there are things to be concerned about. I was stuck on a river in the jungle with melted engine hoses from when the intake took in sand. We were stuck on a sandbar in the middle of nowhere. Someone on our team rigged the hoses so we could get to a jungle town. We just had to wait for the tide to come in. We made it! Whew! Not worrying is easier said than done. I knew we were stuck, and we had a big big problem. We were going nowhere without an engine!

Yeshua told us to get control of ourselves. "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Matthew 6:31-34 NKJV. Everyday can bring good and it can also bring challenges. I had some computer problems this week and I tackled them one at a time. I didn't need to worry, even if I did a little bit. I got it worked out.

We can be attracted to lots of good things, better to do that than waste time and energy with our free time. Stand out in the areas of life where God wants to use us. One of our friends is a nurse and she decided to go to New York City to help the sick there during the COVID 19 crisis. What a brave young lady who decided to help out with the disaster there.

We don't have to necessarily take extreme risks like she did, but what a great example she is to us.

1 Peter 4:8-11 NKJV says:

“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Love, be hospitable, don’t grumble, serve each other well, and use what God gave you. Years ago, I had my weekends free to do occasional ministry events. I thought, why not use some of my time to serve others. I got immensely blessed just serving others and praying for them. **Using our time for God is part of the believer’s life** and can bring us blessings when we give. Seeing someone healed is an amazing blessing to the person who gets healed, but it is also a blessing to the person who took the time to serve.

It says in Leviticus that there must be a blood sacrifice for sin. Yeshua (Jesus) came and gave His life as the final sacrifice for sin. He gave up His life; no one took it from Him (see John 10:18). This portion goes over a lot of important commandments. The Bible talks about keeping God’s commandments a lot. We should be faithful and steadfast to God. We are to “put to death” sin it says in Colossians 3:5 NKJV. These are some strong words. Why not make the effort to do what is right and bring blessing to others instead of sin, and the pain and destruction that can accompany sinful behavior? Be stable in all you do and no matter what, keep trusting in God and be at peace. Worry often just brings extra tension to our situation. There are a lot of good things we can do, but don’t forget to include spiritual things as part of how you use your time. You don’t have to go to extreme risks, but we are commanded to use some of our abilities for the kingdom of God and to also use our spiritual gifts.