



## Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat May 3, 2008 / Nisan 28, 5768

### Parashah #30

Torah: *K'doshim* (Holy Ones), *Vayikra* (Leviticus) 19.1-20.27

Haftorah: *Amos* 9.7-15; *Yechezk'el* (Ezekiel) 20.2-20

Suggested *Messianic Writings*: *Mattityahu* (Matthew) 5.43-48

Shalom,

'Hope everyone had a good Pesakh. We return this week to the regular Torah readings, and the commandments from HaShem continue, on how to live a holy life. In the last reading, in Vayikra 18, HaShem had commanded the people of Israel not to engage in the pagan activities of Egypt, from where they had just come, nor were they to engage in the pagan activities of the land of *Kena'an* (Canaan), where they were headed. Rather, they were to obey the rulings of HaShem, for in obedience, life is promised. Vayikra 19 begins with commandments concerning holiness, parents, Shabbat, and idols. Rabbi Hertz' commentary notes that Vayikra 19 is the central chapter not only of Vayikra, but also of the Torah, and says that the ancient Rabbis declared that "the essentials of the Torah are summarized therein." Hertz also wrote that this chapter has been looked upon as a counterpart of the Ten Commandments, which are in essence repeated throughout the verses.

"You shall be holy, for I, HaShem your God, am holy. You are to *revere* your father and mother, and you are to keep My Shabbats; I am HaShem your God. Do not turn to idols, and do not cast metal gods for yourselves; I am HaShem your God." When HaShem gives a commandment, and emphasizes it with the phrase, "I am HaShem your God," that indicates that one had better pay attention, for He means it, and it is of high importance to Him.

Holy *קָדוֹשׁ kadosh* – the basic meaning, according to Zodhiates, is "what is intrinsically sacred and distinct from (even opposed to) what is common." To be *kadosh* is to be "set apart." Hertz' commentary says concerning *קָדוֹשׁ kadosh*: "Firstly, it denotes the sublime exaltedness and overpowering majesty of God; in the presence of that Divine holiness, mortal man feels 'but dust and ashes' and is crushed by the sense of his unworthiness (Isa 6.5). Secondly, *holy* expresses God's complete freedom from everything that makes men imperfect. Thirdly, *holy* stands for the fullness of God's ethical qualities – for more than goodness, more than purity, more than righteousness, it embraces all these in their ideal completeness... Man is not only to worship God, but to imitate Him. By his deeds he must reveal the Divine that is implanted in him... This 'imitation of God' is held forth by the Rabbis as the highest human ideal... But the LORD is a consuming fire; how can men walk after Him? By being as He is – merciful, loving, long-suffering."

"*Revere* your parents," some versions translate as *fear*; but it means *to reverence*. The Hebrew root is *יָרָא*, *yah-rey*, meaning a positive feeling of awe and respect. We all know that there are people for whom this commandment is very difficult, for others very easy. Yet the idea here is that, as the ArtScroll commentary puts it, "One should act toward his parents as he would toward a sovereign with the power to punish those who treat him disrespectfully... specifically, this commandment prohibits a child from sitting in his parents' regular places, interrupting them, or contradicting them [in an abrupt or disrespectful manner]."

"Do not turn to idols...." Any reader *not* have a problem to one degree or another of someone/thing taking priority, or trying to, in your (spiritual) eyesight ahead of the Creator and His ways? Even what seems good can be an idol – from things like "observing only the letter of the Law" to "observing our *freedom* through Grace."

Treating people with kindness and fairness is important to HaShem: "Love your neighbor as yourself..." we are told. This phrase is repeated eight times in the *Messianic Writings*, five of those by Yeshua. This could easily be [mis]understood as "love your friends," or "love those who live in your same vicinity," but Yeshua took it a little deeper. In Luke 10, when a Torah expert wanted an explanation of exactly who his neighbor was, Yeshua told the parable of the Good Samaritan. We should note here that because of anti-Judaic historical church teachings, it has been incorrectly translated that this man was trying to trap Yeshua, in other words, an incorrect translation can state or infer that any Jew outside of Yeshua's camp was not to be trusted. Brad Young, in his book *The Parables*<sup>1</sup>, points out that this man was a truly a learned man of Torah<sup>2</sup> who was asking a legitimate question; this was not a hostile confrontation. In fact, this was typical of first century CE Judaism – learning involved asking questions and answering questions with more questions.



The scholar's question was indeed legitimate, for "neighbor" in Hebrew is רֵעַ *rey-ah*, and the root does indeed mean "a friend," or, "a person who is close." The name *Rut* רִוּת (Ruth), for example, comes from רֵעַ *rey-ah*, and means, "close companion." A broader more general definition in biblical Hebrew is "anyone." It can also mean "coworker" or "colleague." Young states that in Second Temple Israel the term רֵעַ *rey-ah* in our Vayikra passage would have been understood to mean *only* "a friend," or, "someone in *our* camp." So Yeshua pushed the limit to include the term to mean even an enemy, someone *outside* the camp (and see Mattityahu 5.43-48). The Samaritans were natural enemies of the Jews. Yet in this parable, the "enemy" became the "neighbor." Young<sup>3</sup> also points out, "In essence, this parable teaches [Yeshua's] disciples that when one defines the word 'neighbor,' the message of reciprocity must be heard. In order to understand the meaning of the term 'neighbor,' first one must learn to behave like a neighbor. One must assume the position of someone in need... What would we want someone to do for us, if we had the misfortune of being in a difficult position? To know what the word 'neighbor' means, one must be a neighbor... Everyone should abandon prejudice and love all people – even someone who may be considered to be an enemy... [Yeshua] said to the theologian, 'Go and do likewise.'" Yeshua's teaching is grounded in Torah; it is because of the foundation of Torah that modern-day Israel will do things like care for an injured Palestinian.

We must understand that Yeshua's teaching means that we are to be willing to forgive others and not seek revenge if we are insulted or wronged; we are *not* to try to get even. We are to pray for our enemies, but we also must understand that if we are faced with a life-threatening situation by an evil person, we *have every right* to defend ourselves and those around us. Preservation of life is important to our G-d, although many who don't know Him misunderstand even that. The Sixth Commandment declares, "לֹא תרצח" *Lo Teer'tzakh* You shall not *murder*;" it does *not* say "You shall not *kill*." Support for this thought is found in our Torah portion, Vayikra 19.16, which says, "Don't stand idly by when your neighbor's life is at stake; I am HaShem."

וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָמוֹךָ, *V'a-hav-ta l'ray-ah-kha ka-mo-kha*, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. How do you want to be treated? Hillel, the great Jewish sage who lived around a century before Yeshua, paraphrased this to say, "What is hateful to you, do not do to others." Yeshua said it as, "Always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that sums up the teachings of the Torah and the Prophets" (Mattityahu 7.12). Therein we gain a picture of, "Be holy, for I am holy."

[2008 dates: *Yom HaShoah* / Holocaust Remembrance Day is observed on Friday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>; *Yom HaZikaron* / Israel Remembrance Day is observed on Wednesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>; *Yom HaAtzmaut* / Israel Independence Day is observed on Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup>.]

שְׁאַלוּ שָׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם – *Sha'alu shalom Yerushalayim* – Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

**B'rakhot v' todah rabbah**

(Blessings & thank you very much)

**Mordekhi**

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you into heaven, will come back to you in just the same way as you saw him go into heaven. (Acts 1.11 CJB)

<sup>1</sup> Brad Young, *The Parables, Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*, Hendrickson Publishers

<sup>2</sup> "Lawyer" as some versions have it is a poor translation, for the man was not a lawyer, as the term is used today; he was a biblical scholar, a theologian.

<sup>3</sup> Brad Young, *Jesus the Jewish Theologian*, Hendrickson Publishers