

DO IT BECAUSE I AM HOLY

by Rabbi Dovid Green

The second parsha in our reading this week is Parshas Kedoshim. "Be holy, because I am holy, Hashem your G-d." It sounds like a tall order. However, if G-d expects it from us it means we can do it. For many of the commandments we perform, we recite a blessing first. The text begins "You are the Source of all blessing Hashem, King of the world, Who _made us holy with His commandments_, and commanded us to..." Our holiness is through the performance of the mitzvos, the commandments. Let's see a selection of the commandments of this week's parsha.

1. "Each person should fear his mother and father." What is fearing parents? Don't sit in their place, don't contradict them, don't judge the correctness of their words, don't call them by their first name. A parent is permitted to forego this obligation we have toward them.
2. Leave a corner of a field of standing crops for the poor. This applies to any food which keeps in storage, grows from the ground, is harvested at one time, and is stored. There is no minimum amount to leave, but the Rabbis said one should not leave less than 1/60th of one's crops.
3. Don't deny owing money. This applies to deposits left with you, loans, wages, stolen money, articles of others which you found.
4. Don't hold back the wages of a worker. Even when one agrees to the debt, one should not hold the wages from the employee past the conventional or agreed upon time.
5. Don't put a stumbling block before the blind. This is a commandment (mitzvah) not to cause others to fall through deliberately giving bad advice. It also includes causing another person to sin, such as serving him non-kosher food, or causing him to desecrate the Sabbath.
6. Judge with righteousness. Both plaintiffs should be treated equally, not one standing and the other seated, or one speaking at length and the other given a short time to explain his side. Included in this mitzvah is to give people the benefit of the doubt.
7. One may not speak negatively about another person, or tell someone something negative someone else said about them, even if it is true.
8. One may not hold back from saving another person from danger. We must even try to help a person avoid a monetary loss.
9. One may not hate his fellow in his heart. The way to avoid transgressing this mitzvah is by expressing your anger to the person for what he did to you.
10. One may not embarrass others. This applies especially in public.
11. No taking revenge, and not holding a grudge. Revenge is "you didn't lend me your saw, and so I won't lend you my hammer." Holding a grudge is "here's my saw. I'm not like you."

12. Love your fellow. One must try to relate toward his fellow as he would relate to himself. For example, he should defend his fellow from others who seek to embarrass him, hurt him financially, or physically just as he would do for himself. It is a serious transgression to raise one self up by knocking others down.
13. Stand before age. This mitzvah even includes wise people who are not elderly, and elderly people even if they are not wise.
14. Weights and measures must be exact. This means that people who sell by weight and volume must have counterbalances, and other measurements which are correct by objective standards.

These are some of the mitzvos of parshas Kedoshim. They are the fabric of a holy people. We have a unique relationship with G-d. He tells us to be holy - why? - because I am holy.

Good Shabbos.

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