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בס"ד

Parashat Qedoshim Part II Linkage with the Decalogue

1. Introduction and Commandment 1

Clearly, there is a great deal of linkage between Leviticus 19-20 and the Ten Commandments, as pointed out in *Vayiqra Rabbah* (24:5). However, some of the associations proffered there and in other traditional sources are of a *midrashic* nature while several important but subtle *peshat* details seem to have escaped attention. As a result, many commentators recognize the presence of similarities and leave it at that. This study proposes that not only is the linkage intentional and substantial but it is indispensably part and parcel of the overall structure of the Exodus-Leviticus continuum.

Before establishing a covenant with the Israelites G-d informed them that His goal was that **וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מְמֻלְכָת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ** (“you shall be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” Ex. 19:6). Following proclamation of the Ten Commandments and the balance of the Mount Sinai Lawgiving (20-23) several details of covenant protocol were enacted (Ex. 24). G-d then attached the Mishkan enterprise with an additional layer of lawgiving that emanated from the Tent of Meeting, as recorded in Leviticus. After concluding the laws related to having G-d’s presence represented within the nation (proper sacrificial service and purity), that lawgiving reaches its zenith in our *parasha*.

G-d’s summons to the Israelites “You shall be holy” (Lev. 19:2) with the particulars of application is a major step forward toward the goal that He expressed at the beginning of the process. Here, G-d reveals a much fuller, and, in the ancient world, unique, denotation of the word holiness. Being holy constitutes moral and ethical living in all realms of human behavior together with the promotion of social

justice. This statement closes the “envelope” that began with the Sinaitic Revelation and there are signs of it in our *parasha*.

G-d’s three-word self-identification clause included in His opening statement – **אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם** (“I am Hashem your G-d”) – is reminiscent of His opening three words in the Decalogue – **אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ**. (G-d also used such a formula in contracting the “Covenant of the Parts” with Abram in Gen. 15:7. In the ancient Near East when suzerains addressed their vassals in covenant declarations they often employed such a formula of self-identification.) This **אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם** clause is attested a total of eight times in our Leviticus 19 chapter, reflecting the latter’s close association with the Covenant*, the heart of which is the Decalogue. The term **אֲנִי ה'** (without **אֱלֹהֵיכֶם**) also appears eight times in this chapter, further reinforcing linkage with the Covenant. It is noteworthy that **אֲנִי ה'** in all formulations occurs exactly eighty times in the Torah.

The underlying principle of the Decalogue’s first pronouncement is to acknowledge the *Anokhi Hashem Elokekha*, the sovereignty of Hashem our G-d. It includes being appreciative of what He did for us, as articulated in that pronouncement that He brought us forth from bondage in Egypt. Of course, there is an implication that we are to be dedicated to fulfillment of His commands. The holiness prescription of our chapter, with the many *Ani Hashem* reminders, is to greatly increase our consciousness of Him, as the Psalmist put it, **שְׁוִיתִי ה' לְנֶגְדֵי תַמִּיד** (“I set Hashem before me at all times,” Ps. 16:8). The thought of His presence should suffuse all our actions, prompting us to comport with holiness in family, social, commercial and national activities, in rituals and in interactions with others, in short, in everything we do. This

concept underlies the whole chapter and expands the core formulations of the Decalogue.

After the final *Ani Hashem Elokkhem* in our chapter (v. 36), the verse continues, “who brought you forth from the Land of Egypt,” a clear paraphrase of the Decalogue’s opening verse. As this is the penultimate verse of the chapter, followed only by a summary call to observe all G-d’s statutes and ordinances, the paraphrase creates an *inclusio* with the chapter’s opening, suffusing all the Decalogue expansions that are in-between with a recollection of the Decalogue through the chapter’s structure. These opening and closing verses also create an *inclusio* with the Decalogue itself, identifying the portion of the Torah from it through Leviticus as a cohesive unit, as we have pointed out in previous studies. Despite Leviticus 19 being a unit, it and Chapter 20 comprise a two-chapter unit, as is evident from the penultimate verse of the latter, which includes, *וְהָיִיתֶם לִי קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי... קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה’* (“You shall be holy to Me for I, Hashem, am holy...”) This statement clearly harks back to the beginning of Chapter 19.** Such overlapping, whereby a segment belongs to a smaller and a larger literary entity, is usual in the Bible. This is a matter of significance that we will discuss further in the coming section.

2. Commandments 2, 4 and 5

The first precept after the call to be holy is, *אִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ* (v. 3). We will translate literally, despite the awkwardness, in order to appreciate the full measure of connectivity to the Decalogue: “A man his mother and his father you (plural) shall revere” (v. 3). This is a play on the Decalogue’s *כְּבֹד אֶת אָבִיךָ וְאֶת אִמְךָ*, “Honor your father and your mother” (Ex. 20:12), with virtually every detail in the five-word formulation of the Decalogue commandment reversed or varied. Here, mother precedes father; the verb follows the object and it is in plural; “revere” replaces “honor”; the individual being commanded is mentioned in third person rather than being addressed in second person, and the “*et*” particle is omitted. Virtually every feature that could have been reversed was reversed! This is a decisive sign of intentional complementarity. Between the two formulations, the basic concept is made more comprehensive;

mother with father are equated, as are reverence and honor.

The command to revere parents alludes to Decalogue Commandment 5. Consistent with the chiasmus motif (ABba), revering parents is followed by the law of Shabbat, which is Decalogue Commandment 4. The Shabbat formulation in our context of *וְנֹצֵת שַׁבְּתֵי תִשְׁמְרוּ* (“and My Sabbaths you should guard”), with the noun preceding the verb, reverses the verb-object sequence of the Decalogue’s *יִשְׁמֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת* (“Guard the Sabbath Day.”) In addition, *שָׁמַר* (“guard”) is the word used with the Sabbath formulation in the Deuteronomy version of the Decalogue, which itself is a variant of the Exodus Decalogue’s *זָכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת* (“Remember the Sabbath Day.”)***

Next in our *parasha* are the exhortations not to turn to idols and not to make molten gods (Lev. 19:4), clearly paraphrases of “You shall have no other gods” and “Do not make a graven image,” two basic components of the Decalogue’s Second Commandment. The conclusion of our Leviticus verse is “I am Hashem your G-d,” an allusion to Commandment 1. At this point our passage contains a cluster of extensions of and referrals to Commandments 5, 4, 2 and 1, also a chiasmus structure.

Where is Commandment 3 – *Lo Tissa*, “Do not take the name of Hashem your G-d in vain”? We will now address this question.

3. On Commandment 3

The following four verses concern the *shelamim* (well-being or greeting) sacrifice. The law is that it may only be eaten on the day of sacrifice and on the following day. Whatever is left over to the third day must be burnt in fire. One who eats from it after its time limit “desecrates Hashem’s sancta” (Lev. 19:5-8). Why is such cultic legislation located in the midst of a Decalogue-linked passage, especially given that these *shelamim* laws were previously recorded (Lev. 7:16-18)? How do these laws connect with the preceding or following verses?

Several considerations will help us answer these questions. The *shelamim*, the standard voluntary animal sacrifice that is eaten by the donors, their

families and friends (in purity) and permitted to be taken outside sanctuary precincts, carries a particular risk of causing a desecration of G-d's name. The extended presence of sanctified meat in the homes of common people, vulnerable to spoilage, defilement, and common treatment, would invariably lead to a lessening of respect for sancta and sanctuary to which Hashem's name is attached. The prohibition of eating from sacrificial meat beyond the limited time frame is designed to address this problem. Since the holiness of sacrificial meat obviously stems from the fact that Hashem's name is called upon it, the command not to partake of such meat beyond the permitted time limit, which would lead to its desecration, appears to be presented as an extension of Commandment 3.

There should be no mistake about the fuller meaning of that commandment. It reads, *לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת שֵׁם ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוּן* ("Do not take the name of Hashem your G-d in vain," Ex. 20:7). Although the primary meaning of *Lo Tissa*, ("Do not take") has traditionally been understood as referring to swearing falsely (or in vain), the literal translation of the phrase is "do not raise," or "do not carry." "Do not raise" may imply "upon your lips," thus meaning "swear," but there is a great deal of latitude to expound it as prohibiting "taking" Hashem's name falsely or in vain in whichever context it may be. As M. D. Cassuto defined it in its straightforward meaning: "You shall not invoke His name for any valueless purpose...such as incantations, sorcery, divination and the like" (Commentary on Ex. 20:7). Causing the denigration of sacrificial fare fits right in with the prohibition of violating the sanctity of His name.

The Deuteronomy prohibition of multiple sacrificial sites also appears to have been expounded as an expansion of Commandment 3 (as explained in our *Parashat Re'eh* study). Multiple sites would be violations of maintaining the centrality of *הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוּם שְׁמוֹ* ("the place which Hashem your G-d will choose to place His name there," Deut. 12:21). Thus, *חוּץ לַמָּקוֹם וְחוּץ לְזִמְן* ("outside the sanctuary and beyond the time limit"), two regulatory principles in the laws of sacrifices that are so conceptually linked, are both expounded as extensions of *Lo Tissa*. (This is one of many correlations between the respective sections of Leviticus and Deuteronomy**).

The prohibition to swear falsely by Hashem's name appears in our Leviticus 19 chapter but a number of verses later (v. 12). It is included within a cluster of verses that deals with various applications of Commandment 8, the prohibition to steal. Why was it separated from the verses that expound the early commandments? This furnishes further support for the view that the verses dealing with sacrifices are elaborations of Commandment 3. Swearing falsely by Hashem's name entails two distinct violations, desecrating His name and deception of people. The latter effect implies stealing of some sort, whether it was focused on tangible items or not. By placing the prohibition to swear falsely in the midst of the Commandment 8 applications, it is clear that in this particular context swearing falsely is not being viewed as the primary indicator of Commandment 3. Its inclusion with Commandment 8 applications "cleared" the Commandment 3 slot for the law concerning the time limit on eating *shelamim*.

4. The Later Commandments

The two verses following the *shelamim* passage forbid a landowner from harvesting every last edge of his field, from gathering the harvest gleanings of field and vineyard as well as from picking the grape clusters that are underdeveloped. He must leave them for the poor and stranger (vv. 9-10). The very next verse (v. 11) begins with *לֹא תִגְנוֹב* ("do not steal"), the precise formulation of the Decalogue Commandment 8 prohibition of stealing. Forbidding a landowner to take that produce of his land that the law designated for the needy is an introduction to, indeed an extension of, "do not steal." The needy should be considered as owning the portion designated for them.

The verse that begins with "Do not steal" continues with "do not deal deceitfully or falsely one man with another." Next is the law prohibiting swearing falsely by Hashem's name (v. 12) followed by the prohibitions of defrauding, robbing and withholding a laborer's wages (v. 13), a full assortment of applications of the commandment against stealing.

Attached to the Commandment 8 applications are the prohibitions of cursing a deaf individual and placing a stumbling block in front of the blind (v. 14). Exploiting another's disability without his knowledge

was very possibly intended as another extension of stealing and deception. This is reminiscent of the Talmudic formulation of גְּנֵבַת דַּעַת, “stealing one’s knowledge or opinion,” that was understood to be included in the category of stealing. Mention of the deaf with the blind probably reflects a standard combination that was kept intact.

The succeeding verse (15) mandates a full commitment to ensure justice in a court of law. This corresponds to and supplements Commandment 9, which forbids giving false testimony.

This is followed by a verse whose second half is לֹא תֵעָמַד עַל דַּם רֵעֶיךָ (v. 16). Several very different explanations have been proposed for this statement. Regardless of which turns out to be correct, the clause seems to address a matter that involves the possible loss of someone’s life, given that דָּם means blood, which represents life. This is the case whether it prohibits:

- to stand by idly while another’s blood is being spilled, or in jeopardy,
- rising (or conspiring) against another’s life, or
- to stand upon – in the sense of profiting from, or raising or building up oneself upon, the loss of another’s life.

Thus, this verse is a broadening of Commandment 6, the prohibition of murder.

The first half of verse 16, לֹא תִלְךְ רַכִּיל בְּעַמֶּיךָ, (“Do not go about *rakhil* among your people”) is also difficult to translate precisely, but it may be linked to the taking of life. In one of Ezekiel’s transmittal of Hashem’s reprimand of Israel there are a number of paraphrases of some of our chapter’s verses (in what is the *haftarah* reading of our *parasha* in some communities). He stated, אֲנָשֵׁי רַכִּיל הָיוּ בְּךָ לְמַעַן שֹׁפֵךְ דָּם (“*Rakhil* men have been in your midst to the effect that they shed blood” Ezek.22:9). This indicates that *rakhil* should be understood as behavior that, whether directly or indirectly, leads to blood-shedding, regardless of which proposed translations of *rakhil* turns out to be correct, whether it refers to one who:

- comports with baseness,
- engages in talebearing, which often causes irreparable damage and leads to hatred and

violence, or reveals confidences, which also has destructive results (see Prov. 11:13; 20:19), or

- has a strictly merchant-like disposition, mercenary in relating to others.

Three verses before in that Ezekiel context, we read: “Behold, the chieftains of Israel, each acting by his power have been in your midst, to the effect that they shed blood” (לְמַעַן שֹׁפֵךְ דָּם). Three verses later we read: “Bribery they took in your midst to the effect that they shed blood.”

The following two verses in our Leviticus passage (17-18) seem to conclude the direct expounding of the Decalogue, apparently as derivatives of Commandment 10, as we shall explain shortly. First is the prohibition to hate one’s brother in one’s heart, followed, in the same verse, with the responsibility to reprove wrongdoers. Perhaps the latter should be understood as a strategy to ameliorate one’s ill feelings toward another by extending reproof rather than remaining “bottled up.” The third clause in verse 17 is וְלֹא תִשָּׂא עָלָיו הַטָּא, which is generally translated “and do not incur guilt because of him.” This may be an exhortation to be careful in relating to one who is hated, not to cause him any harm (the Qayin and Hebel story comes to mind.) Perhaps it is commenting on the previous clause, do not incur guilt on account of him by refraining from reproof, or when reproofing, do not incur guilt on account of him by doing so in a hurtful manner.

The next verse begins with the prohibition to be vengeful or harbor a grudge and concludes with, in what appears to be the high point of the chapter and of the Leviticus program, “love your fellowman as yourself.” As hatred, vengeance and holding grudges may lead to all types of sins, including murder – indeed, the process leading to that capital crime is frequently marked with these characteristics – they may be seen as linked to verse 16 that prohibits causing loss of life.

It appears probable that these “precepts of the heart” between man and man, particularly the final one of “love your fellowman as yourself,” correspond to Commandment 10, “Do not covet.” The latter is the

“precept of the heart” of the Decalogue’s interpersonal relationship section. The correspondence between “Do not covet” your fellowman’s wife, home, field, slave or property and “Love your fellow as yourself,” a formula that applies to all his possessions, is obvious. Both of these are foundational and ideal precepts designed to prevent violation of the previous commandments. An individual who loves and cares for his fellow man cannot think of taking what belongs to him. “Love your fellow as yourself” may thus be seen as a counterpart to and extension of Commandment 10. (We will define and elaborate on this phrase in our coming study.)

At this point the Holiness Code moves to other regulations. All Decalogue Commandments were expounded except Commandment 7, “*lo tin’af*,” the prohibition of adultery. The explanation for that exclusion is related to the fact that in the following chapter, after a denunciation of idolatry, there will be a major statement of sexual prohibitions beginning with the prohibition of adultery. Linkage with the Decalogue is there established by a most unusual multiple attestation and emphasis of the *na’af* root, the one used in the Decalogue for adultery. In the formulation of the law that forbids sexual relations with another’s wife (Lev. 20:10), the essential clause of prohibition is stated twice, each time with the *na’af* term. That root is also employed two additional times in that verse. (In the major statement of sexual prohibitions in Leviticus 18, which served as an introduction to the call to holiness, the formulation forbidding adultery, tellingly, does not employ the *na’af* root.)

As pointed out earlier, the penultimate verse of Chapter 20 repeats the call to be holy in virtually the

same words in which it is formulated at the opening of Chapter 19, thus indicating the linkage.** In addition, the *ה'אני* and *ה'אלקיכם* phrases are attested two times each in Chapter 20, so that together with the eight attestations of each in Chapter 19 the total is ten each for the two chapters, very likely corresponding to the Ten Commandments.

In summary, the conclusion appears inescapable: *Parashat Qedoshim* links its expanded definition of holiness to the Decalogue by various literary means, enriching Israel’s conception of its responsibilities as contracted in its Covenant with G-d.

Endnotes

* On the significance of the number eight and its multiples see our study *On Number Symbolism in the Torah From the Work of Rabbi Solomon D. Sassoon*.

** For a discussion of relevant matters, see our study *Some Correspondences Between Leviticus 17-26 and Deuteronomy 12-28 and the Larger Picture*

*** In our *Parashat Re’eh* study we will point out that the inversion of honoring parents and Shabbat seems also to hold in the Deuteronomy expounding of the Decalogue. The call of *ה'אלקיכם לה' בנים אתם*, the responsibility to recognize ourselves as sons of Hashem our G-d, and consequently to honor Him as a parent, and not to mutilate our human body, etc. (Deut. 14:1-2) appears to be an *a fortiori* expansion of Commandment 5, while the succeeding section of the three pilgrimage festivals are formulated as an extension of Shabbat.

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