

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

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Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary
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16 The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of the LORD.²The LORD said to Moses:

Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will into the Shrine behind the curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the ark, lest he die; for I appear in the cloud over the cover.³Thus only shall Aaron enter the Shrine: with a bull of the herd for a purification offering and a ram for a burnt offering.—⁴He shall be dressed in a sacral linen tunic, with linen

טז וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקִרְבָּתָם לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה וַיִּמְתּוּ: ² וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן אַחִירָךְ וְאַל־יָבֹא בְכַל־עַתָּה אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבֵּית לַפָּרֹכֶת אֶל־פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאָרֶן וְלֹא יָמוּת כִּי בַעֲנַן אֲרָאָה עַל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת: ³ בְּזֹאת יָבֹא אַהֲרֹן אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ בַּפֶּרֶךְ בֶּן־בִּקֹּר לְחַטָּאת וְאֵיל לְעֹלָה: ⁴ כִּתְנֶנְתָּ בֹדֶק קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבָּשׁ וּמְכַנְסֵי־בֹדֶק יִהְיוּ

THE YOM KIPPUR RITUAL (16:1–34)

The primary objective of these expiatory rites is to maintain a pure sanctuary. An impure, or defiled, sanctuary would induce God to withdraw His Presence from the Israelite community.

Verses 1–2 introduce the rites by referring to the untimely deaths of Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron who suffered because they improperly entered the sanctuary (Lev. 10). This reference served as an admonition to the priesthood, because the purification of the sanctuary required the High Priest to enter its innermost part. If extreme care were not exercised in this endeavor, he would risk death.

2. into the Shrine behind the curtain That is, on the inward side of the curtain that divided the Shrine, or Holy of Holies, from the larger area first encountered on entering the sanctuary.

in front of the cover that is upon the ark See Exod. 25:17–22.

for I appear in the cloud over the cover God’s Presence (*Kavod*) was depicted as a cloud with fire burning inside it. The cloud pervaded the sanctuary and was visible above it.

PREPARATIONS FOR PURIFICATION
(vv. 3–10)

The main officiant in the purification of the sanctuary was the High Priest. Although he was assisted at certain points in the proceedings, the efficacy of the entire ritual depended primarily on him.

4. For the rites described here, the High Priest donned unadorned white linen vestments that were fashioned especially for the occasion.

CHAPTER 16

This is one of the *parashiyot* whose name and opening words set the tone for all that follows. “After the death of the two sons of Aaron,” we are drawn to confront our own mortality and to reflect on the direction of our lives, for the text proceeds by describing the *Yom Kippur* rituals of cleansing, self-scrutiny, and self-renewal. The rituals of the Day of Atonement are presented here rather than in the listing of holidays in Lev. 23, because their focus is not

so much the public observance of *Yom Kippur*. Their focus is the priestly responsibility to cleanse and purify the sanctuary so that it will be a fit place for the atonement rituals. (*Aḥarei Mot* is read in the spring, six months before and after *Yom Kippur*, as if to suggest that any season is an appropriate time for self-scrutiny and atonement.)

3–5. For the Midrash (Lev. R. 21:11), the bull recalls the merit of Abraham’s offering in Gen. 18:7, the ram is a reminder of Isaac’s readiness to be sacrificed in Gen. 22:13, and the two

HALAKHAH L’MA’ASEH

16:4ff. This chapter’s description of the *Yom Kippur* rite of expiation for the community’s sins is the Torah reading for *Yom Kippur* morning and serves as the basis for the *Avodah* service on *Yom Kippur*.

breeches next to his flesh, and be girt with a linen sash, and he shall wear a linen turban. They are sacral vestments; he shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.—⁵And from the Israelite community he shall take two he-goats for a purification offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

⁶Aaron is to offer his own bull of purification offering, to make expiation for himself and for his household. ⁷Aaron shall take the two he-goats and let them stand before the LORD at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting; ⁸and he shall place lots upon the two goats, one marked for the LORD and the other marked for Azazel. ⁹Aaron shall bring forward the goat designated by lot for the LORD, which he is to offer as a purification offering; ¹⁰while the goat designated by lot for Azazel shall be left standing alive be-

עַל-בְּשָׂרוֹ וּבְאַבְנֵט בַד יִחְגֹר וּבְמִצְנַפֶּת בַד יִצְנַף בְּגָדֵי-קֹדֶשׁ הֵם וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם אֶת-בְּשָׂרוֹ וּלְבָשָׂם: ⁵ וּמֵאֵת עַדְתּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִקַּח שְׁנֵי-שְׂעִירֵי עֲזִים לַחֲטָאֹת וְאֵיל אֶחָד לְעֹלָה:

⁶ וְהִקְרִיב אֶהְרֹן אֶת-פֶּר הַחֲטָאֹת אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וּכְפָר בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד בֵּיתוֹ: ⁷ וְלָקַח אֶת-שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִים וְהֶעֱמִיד אֹתָם לְפָנָי יְהוָה פְּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ⁸ וְנָתַן אֶהְרֹן עַל-שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִים גִּרְלוֹת גּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לַיהוָה וְגּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לְעֹזָאֵזֶל: ⁹ וְהִקְרִיב אֶהְרֹן אֶת-הַשְּׂעִיר אֲשֶׁר עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לַיהוָה וְעָשָׂהוּ חֲטָאֹת: ¹⁰ וְהַשְּׂעִיר אֲשֶׁר עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לְעֹזָאֵזֶל יַעֲמַד-חַי לְפָנָי יְהוָה

5. from the Israelite community . . . two he-goats Purification offerings on behalf of the entire community usually consisted of large cattle; those offered by individual Israelites were usually from the flocks, as in 4:22f. The *Yom Kippur* ritual was an exception. He-goats from the flocks served as purification offerings for the entire people.

7. The two he-goats were stationed near the altar so that one could be chosen by lot as a sacrifice and the other one could be selected as the scapegoat.

8. one marked for the LORD and the other marked for Azazel One lot bore the inscription

“for the LORD” (*l’YHVH*) and the other bore the inscription “for Azazel” (*la-azazel*). The precise meaning of the Hebrew *azazel*, found nowhere else in the Bible, has been disputed since antiquity and remains uncertain.

9. offer as a purification offering He designates it as a purification offering. Assigning an animal as a sacrifice was a formal act accompanied by a declaration.

10. left standing alive The he-goat selected for Azazel was not slaughtered for a sacrifice, as was the other goat, but served as a different means of obtaining expiation.

goats (v. 5) symbolize the meal Jacob prepared for his father to receive his father’s blessing (Gen. 27:9). The four linen garments (v. 4) represent Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. On *Yom Kippur*, we come before God armed not only with our own merit but also with that of our ancestors, extending through the generations.

6. The ritual of the High Priest that leads to atonement is rooted in the premise that the sanctuary, which represents the presence of God, is also a human institution, subject to the flaws and imperfections of any human institution. Religious leaders, however pious and devoted, are human beings. Thus Aaron begins the purgation process by bringing an offering on his own behalf and on behalf of his fellow

kohanim for whatever they may have done wrong. The Midrash takes the words “for himself and his household” to mean that the High Priest must be married. He comes before God, not as a pious individual but as the representative of a flawed community aspiring to holiness. How could he bear their prayers and hopes unless he had learned to care for and share the hopes and dreams of another person?

8. one marked for the LORD and the other marked for Azazel A Hasidic comment interprets these words to teach us that we should spend as much time, money, and energy on God’s purposes as we do on earthly pleasures.

10. If Azazel is taken to be the name of a demon, either the demon that entices people

fore the LORD, to make expiation with it and to send it off to the wilderness for Azazel.

¹¹Aaron shall then offer his bull of purification offering, to make expiation for himself and his household. He shall slaughter his bull of purification offering, ¹²and he shall take a panful of glowing coals scooped from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of finely ground aromatic incense, and bring this behind the curtain. ¹³He shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, so that the cloud from the incense screens the cover that is over [the Ark of] the Pact, lest he die. ¹⁴He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger over the cover on the east side; and in front of the cover he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. ¹⁵He shall then slaughter the people's goat of purification offer-

PURIFICATION OF THE SANCTUARY (vv. 11–19)

The sanctuary was purified in two stages, represented first by the bull and then by the he-goat; i.e., by the purification offerings of priesthood and people, respectively. This is the only instance in the Torah's priestly laws in which sacrificial blood is brought into the Holy of Holies.

11. Nothing was placed on the altar at this point. The actual sacrifice is described in verse 25.

12. the altar before the LORD This designation must refer to the altar of burnt offerings in

לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו לְשַׁלַּח אֹתוֹ לְעִזְאֵזֶל
הַמִּדְבָּרָה:

¹¹וְהִקְרִיב אֶהֱרֹן אֶת־פֶּרֶךְ הַחֻטָּאת אֲשֶׁר־
לוֹ וּכְפָר בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד בֵּיתוֹ וּשְׁחַט אֶת־
פֶּרֶךְ הַחֻטָּאת אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ: ¹²וְלָקַח מִלֵּאֲ־
הַמִּחֻתָּה גִּחְלֵי־אֵשׁ מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִלִּפְנֵי
יְהוָה וּמִלֵּא חֲפָנָיו קִטְרֹת סַמִּים דָּקָה
וְהִבִּיא מִבַּיִת לַפְּרֻכָּת: ¹³וְנָתַן אֶת־
הַקִּטְרֹת עַל־הָאֵשׁ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְכִסָּה אֶעֱנֶן
הַקִּטְרֹת אֶת־הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָעֵדוּת
וְלֹא יָמוּת: ¹⁴וְלָקַח מִדָּם הַפָּר וְהִזָּה
בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ עַל־פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת קִדְמָה וּלִפְנֵי
הַכַּפֹּרֶת יִזָּה שֶׁבַע־פְּעָמִים מִן־הַדָּם
בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ: ¹⁵וּשְׁחָט אֶת־שְׂעִיר הַחֻטָּאת
אֲשֶׁר לָעָם וְהִבִּיא אֶת־דָּמוֹ אֶל־מִבֵּית

the sanctuary courtyard, because only it had a perpetual fire burning, allowing the High Priest to bring the coals from there into the sanctuary.

finely ground aromatic incense The prescription for blending this incense is provided in Exod. 30:34–38.

13. the Pact The Ark is referred to in this way because the tablets of “the Pact” (*ba-Edut*), the covenant between God and Israel, were deposited in it (Exod. 40:20).

lest he die The incense cloud served to protect the High Priest while he stood in the immediate area of God's Presence.

to sin or the malign power that testifies against them on the Day of Atonement, then the scapegoat is cast into the wilderness (or in later interpretations, thrown off a cliff) rather than sacrificed in the usual manner, to avoid violating the ban against offering sacrifices to demons (Ibn Ezra). A *midrash* sees Israel offering the scapegoat to Azazel as a bribe to persuade him not to testify against Israel or as a distraction to keep him from his evil work (PdRE).

What can we see as the meaning of the scapegoat if we do not accept the Azazel-as-demon theory? It may be a symbol of the evil impulse itself, the tendency to be led astray by the animal part of our nature, by lust or appetite. It may have been believed that words alone were

not enough to rid the Israelites of the inclination to do wrong; something physical had to be expelled from their communal midst. Hirsch interprets the two goats homiletically: “We can follow our sensual instincts into the wilderness, leading to self-destruction, or we can sacrifice our instincts to the service of God.”

13. The Talmud suggests that the offering of incense, which has scent but no physical presence, atones for sins of gossip and slander, which are also without physical reality but can be carried far and wide with serious consequences. There are more sins relating to improper speech in the *Yom Kippur* confessional than any other category of wrongdoing (BT Yoma 44a).

ing, bring its blood behind the curtain, and do with its blood as he has done with the blood of the bull: he shall sprinkle it over the cover and in front of the cover.

¹⁶Thus he shall purge the Shrine of the impurity and transgression of the Israelites, whatever their sins; and he shall do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which abides with them in the midst of their impurity. ¹⁷When he goes in to make expiation in the Shrine, nobody else shall be in the Tent of Meeting until he comes out.

When he has made expiation for himself and his household, and for the whole congregation of Israel, ¹⁸he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and purge it: he shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the goat and apply it to each of the horns of the altar; ¹⁹and the rest of the blood he shall sprinkle on it with his finger seven times. Thus he shall purify it of the impurity of the Israelites and consecrate it.

²⁰When he has finished purging the Shrine, the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, the live goat shall be brought forward. ²¹Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat

לְפָרֶכֶת וְעָשָׂה אֶת־דָּמוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְדָם הַפָּר וְהִזָּה אֹתוֹ עַל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת וּלְפָנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת:

¹⁶ וְכִפֶּר עַל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִטְּמֵאוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִפְּשָׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל־חַטָּאתָם וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה לְאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד הַשֹּׁכֵן אִתָּם בְּתוֹךְ טְמֵאוֹתָם: ¹⁷ וְכָל־אֲדָם לֹא־יִהְיֶה אִתּוֹ בְּבָאוֹ לְכַפֵּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ עַד־צֵאתוֹ

וְכִפֶּר בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעֵד כָּל־קַהֲלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ¹⁸ וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר לְפָנֵי־יְהוָה וְכִפֶּר עָלָיו וּלָקַח מִדָּם הַפָּר וּמִדָּם הַשְּׂעִיר וְנָתַן עַל־קַרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב: ¹⁹ וְהִזָּה עָלָיו מִן־הַדָּם בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים וְטָהְרוּ וְקִדְּשׁוּ מִטְּמֵאוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

²⁰ וְכִלְהָ מִכַּפֶּר אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְהִקְרִיב אֶת־הַשְּׂעִיר הַחַי: ²¹ וְסָמַךְ אֶהָרֶן אֶת־שְׁתֵּי יָדָיו עַל־רֹאשׁ הַשְּׂעִיר הַחַי וְהִתְוַדָּה עָלָיו

16. This was the concession made by God out of His love for Israel. He allowed His people to build an earthly residence for Him, on condition that its purity be strictly maintained.

17. nobody else shall be in the Tent of Meeting On the occasion of this ritual, only the High Priest, who had undergone meticulous purification for his role on *Yom Kippur* and who held a special status, was permitted inside the tent.

18. he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD The High Priest did not leave the tent itself, but came out of the Holy of Holies to the outer chamber of the tent.

19. In this instance, purification was accomplished by the use of sacrificial blood from the purification offerings.

21. iniquities and transgressions . . . their sins These three categories of wrongdoing are defined in the Talmud as follows: *Avon* (iniquity), "twisting," is a deviation from the

DISPATCH OF THE SCAPEGOAT (vv. 20–22)

After completing the purification of the sanctuary by means of the blood rites, the High Priest turned his attention to the second mode of purification, the rite of riddance that involved the scapegoat. (The name, from "escape goat," first appeared in Tyndale's English translation of the Bible in 1530.)

20. brought forward The scapegoat was brought near to the altar of burnt offerings and stood facing the entrance of the courtyard, from which it would depart.

21. confess over it The confessional enumerated the various sins to bring them out into the open. Once isolated in this way, the sins could be exorcised. Sinfulness, like impurity, was

straight path due to temptation. *Pesha* (transgression), "rebellion," is a rejection of the law and of the right of God to direct one's behavior. *Het* (sin), "missing the mark," is a transgres-

and confess over it all the iniquities and transgressions of the Israelites, whatever their sins, putting them on the head of the goat; and it shall be sent off to the wilderness through a designated man. ²²Thus the goat shall carry on it all their iniquities to an inaccessible region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.

²³And Aaron shall go into the Tent of Meeting, take off the linen vestments that he put on when he entered the Shrine, and leave them there. ²⁴He shall bathe his body in water in the holy precinct and put on his vestments; then he shall come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, making expiation for himself and for the people. ²⁵The fat of the purification offering he shall turn into smoke on the altar.

²⁶He who set the Azazel-goat free shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; after that he may reenter the camp.

²⁷The bull of purification offering and the goat of purification offering whose blood was brought in to purge the Shrine shall be taken outside the camp; and their hides, flesh, and dung shall be consumed in fire. ²⁸He who

אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־כָּל־פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל־חַטָּאתָם וְנָתַן אֹתָם עַל־רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁעִיר וְשָׁלַח בְּיַד־אִישׁ עֵתִי הַמְדַבֵּרָה: ²² וְנִשָּׂא הַשָּׁעִיר עָלָיו אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹתָם אֶל־אֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה וְשָׁלַח אֶת־הַשָּׁעִיר בְּמִדְבָּר:

²³ וּבָא אַהֲרֹן אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּפָשַׁט אֶת־בְּגָדֵי הַבָּד אֲשֶׁר לְבָשׁ בְּבֹאוֹ אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְהִנִּיחָם שָׁם: ²⁴ וְרָחַץ אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם בַּמָּקוֹם קָדוֹשׁ וּלְבָשׁ אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיֵּצֵא וַעֲשָׂה אֶת־עֹלֹתוֹ וְאֶת־עֹלֹת הָעָם וּכְפָר בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד הָעָם: ²⁵ וְאֵת חֶלֶב הַחַטָּאת יִקְטִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:

²⁶ וְהִמְשִׁיחַ אֶת־הַשָּׁעִיר לְעֹזָאֵל יִכַּבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָבֹא אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה:

²⁷ וְאֵת פֶּרֶ הַחַטָּאת וְאֵת שְׁעִיר הַחַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר הוּבָא אֶת־דָּמָם לְכַפֵּר בְּקֹדֶשׁ יוֹצֵיא אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְשָׂרְפוּ בְּאֵשׁ אֶת־עֹרֹתָם וְאֶת־בְּשָׂרָם וְאֶת־פְּרָשָׁם: ²⁸ וְהִשְׂרַף אֹתָם

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thought to be an external force that clings to people; it was necessary, therefore, to “drive out,” or detach, sins.

22. The Bible does not provide any information on what was done with the scapegoat in the wilderness.

AFTER THE SCAPEGOAT'S DISPATCH (vv. 23–28)

23. Aaron shall go into the Tent of Meeting
Aaron was to approach the tent. It is hardly conceivable that he would enter the tent and disrobe inside, because Exod. 20:23 specifically

forbids the exposure of a priest's nakedness near the altar. After dispatching the scapegoat, the High Priest was standing in the courtyard near the altar of burnt offerings. He proceeded to a screened area, adjacent to the tent, where he disrobed, bathed, and donned his golden vestments.

24. he shall come out From the screened area.

25. The fatty portions of the two purification offerings—the bull and the he-goat—were burned on the altar. The rest was burned outside the camp.

26. bathe Before re-entering the camp.

sion as a result of ignorance of or forgetting of the law (BT Yoma 36b). Soloveitchik stresses the need for verbal confession of one's misdeeds: “As long as ideas are bottled up in one's mind, they are unclear. Unexpressed thoughts of *t'shuvah* [repentance] are meaningless. . . . A confession which is not just lip service, one that

emanates from an anguished soul and an aching heart, is counted as an offering on the altar.”

24. expiation for himself and for the people
“*Yom Kippur* atones for sins against God. For infractions against our neighbors, we must seek their forgiveness before we can ask God to forgive us” (M Yoma 8:9).

burned them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; after that he may re-enter the camp.

²⁹And this shall be to you a law for all time: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall practice self-denial; and you shall do no manner of work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you. ³⁰For on this day expiation shall be made for you to purify you of all your sins; you shall be pure before the LORD. ³¹It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; it is

יִכַּבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָבֹא אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה׃
²⁹וְהִיְתָה לָכֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בַּעֲשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ תַּעֲנּוּ אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם וְכָל־מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ הָאֲזֹרָח וְהַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם׃ ³⁰כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטָהַר אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל חַטָּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תִּטְהָרוּ׃ ³¹שַׁבַּת שְׁבֻתוֹן הִיא לָכֶם וְעַנִּיתֶם אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם

AN ANNUAL EXPIATION DAY (vv. 29–34)

Once the sanctuary was in operation, periodic purification was necessary. The laws in this section, addressed to the entire people not only to the priesthood, ordain an annual Day of Atonement.

29. a law for all time What is ordained here is to be practiced in all future generations.

the seventh month According to Exod. 12:2, the month of *Pesah* was to be counted as the first month of the year. According to a Babylonian calendrical reckoning, also, the year began in the spring. The Mishnah (RH 1:1) refers to *Tishrei* as the month from which the years are to be reckoned, which is our practice today. When exactly this was instituted, we do not know.

you shall practice self-denial In biblical literature “*innah nefesh*,” the idiom for the practice of self-denial, almost always connotes fasting.

you shall do no manner of work This includes the alien, for if resident aliens, such as merchants and craftsmen, were to continue their daily pursuits, the Israelite community would be affected. Aliens were not, however, expected to practice self-denial, only to honor the day by abstaining from work.

30. This verse introduces the purification rite of the people.

31. sabbath of complete rest Hebrew: *shabbat shabbaton*, a doubling of the word “*shabbat*.” This has the force of a superlative, indicating the prohibition of all manner of labor, even the preparation of food necessary for subsistence.

29. the alien who resides among you Each of us carries a “stranger” inside us, a part of us that is alien to our essential self. Each of us must confront this “stranger” as we examine ourselves on *Yom Kippur*.

30. expiation . . . purify Soloveitchik distinguishes between “atonement” (expiation), restoring our relationship to God, and “purification,” removing the stain of sin from our personality. Atonement relies on God’s readiness to love and to accept imperfect people. Purification involves the capacity of those imperfect people to improve. This verse is prominent in the *Yom Kippur* liturgy.

31. you shall practice self-denial This is the basis for the obligation to fast and to ab-

stain on *Yom Kippur* from bathing, sexual activity, and wearing leather. Earlier translations rendered the verse as “you shall afflict your souls,” conveying the idea that the purpose of the *Yom Kippur* fast is to punish ourselves, to make us uncomfortable, making up for the self-indulgence of the rest of the year. The translation used here teaches the purpose of the fast not as punishment but as a proclamation of our humanity.

Human beings are the only creatures who can control their appetites, who can be hungry and choose not to eat. By fasting on *Yom Kippur*, we proclaim that we are masters of our appetites, not slaves to them. In addition, fasting is meant to free us to focus on the spiritual

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16:31. self-denial Jewish law requires those who are ill or infirm to follow doctor’s orders to eat, drink, and take medicine even on *Yom Kippur*. Even in the absence of doctor’s orders, the infirm and ill are allowed on fast days to eat and drink if they feel the necessity (BT Yoma 83a).

a law for all time. ³²The priest who has been anointed and ordained to serve as priest in place of his father shall make expiation. He shall put on the linen vestments, the sacral vestments. ³³He shall purge the innermost Shrine; he shall purge the Tent of Meeting and the altar; and he shall make expiation for the priests and for all the people of the congregation.

³⁴This shall be to you a law for all time: to make expiation for the Israelites for all their sins once a year.

And Moses did as the LORD had commanded him.

17 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

²Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelite people and say to them:

This is what the LORD has commanded: ³if anyone of the house of Israel slaughters an ox

33. purge the innermost Shrine The primary sense of the Hebrew for “purge” (*kipper*) is “to wipe off, cleanse,” as in cleansing with detergents. In the biblical conception, expiation was

חֲקַת עוֹלָם: ³² וְכִפֵּר הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר־יִמָּשַׁח
 אֹתוֹ וְאֲשֶׁר יִמְלֹא אֶת־יָדָיו לְכַהֵן תַּחַת
 אָבִיו וְלִבְשֵׁ אֶת־בְּגָדֵי הַבֵּד בְּגַדֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ:
³³ וְכִפֵּר אֶת־מִקְדָּשׁ הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֶת־אֹהֶל
 מוֹעֵד וְאֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ יִכַּפֵּר וְעַל הַכֹּהֲנִים
 וְעַל־כָּל־עַם הַקְּהָל יִכַּפֵּר:

³⁴ וְהִיְתֵה־זֹאת לָכֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְכַפֵּר
 עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל־חַטָּאתָם אַחַת
 בַּשָּׁנָה

וַיַּעַשׂ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: פ

17 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

² דַּבֵּר אֶל־אֹהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו וְאֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי
 יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם

זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה לֵאמֹר: ³ אִישׁ
 אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחַט שׁוֹר

not the automatic result of performing certain acts. Purification resulted when God accepted the acts of the priests and of the people and granted expiation.

The Pursuit of Holiness (17:1–26:46)

Chapters 17–26 form a distinct unit; its central idea is that the entire people Israel bears the responsibility of seeking to achieve holiness. For that reason, this section has come to be known as the Holiness Code.

PROLOGUE: PROPER WORSHIP (17:1–16)

2. to all the Israelite people God addresses

these ordinances to the people as a whole not just to the leaders and the priesthood.

3. the house of Israel The delineation of the Israelite people as “the house of Israel” expresses the close relationship and common descent of all Israelites.

slaughters an ox or sheep or goat The Hebrew verb translated as “slaughter” (שָׁחַט) can re-

dimension of our lives rather than worry about our physical needs.

“By fasting on *Yom Kippur* we should deepen our sensitivity for those who lack food and drink. This is part of the meaning of passages from Isaiah which are read as the *haftarah* on *Yom Kippur*. Through fasting we should be inspired to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked, to loosen the fetters of those who are bound” (Seymour Siegel). Likewise, the

avoidance of leather—obtained by killing an animal—is an expression of our compassion and reverence for life on a day when we pray to be inscribed in the Book of Life.

32. to serve as priest in place of his father “Every generation has its own particular complex of sins to which it is vulnerable. Therefore, every generation needs its own spiritual guide to show it the way to atonement and reconciliation” (Salanter).

or sheep or goat in the camp, or does so outside the camp, ⁴and does not bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to the LORD, before the LORD's Tabernacle, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man: he has shed blood; that man shall be cut off from among his people. ⁵This is in order that the Israelites may bring the sacrifices which they have been making in the open—that they may bring them before the LORD, to the priest, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and offer them as sacrifices of well-being to the LORD; ⁶that the priest may dash the blood against the altar of the LORD at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and turn the fat into smoke as a pleasing odor to the LORD; ⁷and that they may offer their sacrifices no more to the goat-demons after whom they stray. This shall be to them a law for all time, throughout the ages.

אוֹכֵל־בָּשָׂר אוֹ-עֵז בַּמַּחֲנֶה אוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחָט מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה: ⁴ וְאֵל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא הֵבִיאוּ לְהִקְרִיב קֶרֶבֶן לַיהוָה לִפְנֵי מִשְׁכַּן יְהוָה דָּם יִחָשֵׁב לְאִישׁ הַהוּא דָם שָׁפָךְ וְנִכְרַת הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מִקֶּרֶב עַמּוֹ: ⁵ לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יָבִיאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-זְבַחֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר הֵם זֹבְחִים עַל-פְּנֵי הַשְּׁדָה וְהֵבִיאוּם לַיהוָה אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד אֶל-הַפֶּהוּן וְזָבְחוּ וְזָבְחוּ שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה אוֹתָם: ⁶ וְזָרַק הַפֶּהוּן אֶת-הַדָּם עַל-מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהִקְטִיר הַחֵלֶב לְרִיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה: ⁷ וְלֹא-יִזְבְּחוּ עוֹד אֶת-זְבַחֵיהֶם לְשַׁעִירֵם אֲשֶׁר הֵם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם חֶקֶת עוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה-זֹאת לָהֶם לְדוֹרָתָם:

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[שלישי]

fer to slaughter in the general sense. This implies that whenever an Israelite slaughtered an animal, even for food, that act had to be carried out at the one legitimate altar located at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. The verb can also mean “to slaughter a sacrifice.” Taken in that sense, the verse suggests that only ritual sacrifices had to be made at the legitimate altar. It is probable that the latter sense of the verb is intended. But there are scholars who believe that in an earlier stage in the history of Israelite worship, all slaughter of animals, even for food, had to be of a sacral character.

4. before the LORD's Tabernacle The place of sacrifice is to be restricted to the tabernacle altar.

has shed blood The Hebrew idiom for shedding blood (*shafakh dam*) usually refers to inten-

tional murder. Its use here dramatizes the extreme seriousness of improper sacrifice.

5. in the open Formerly, the Israelites had offered their sacrifices outside the camp as well as within it.

bring them before the LORD, to the priest Sacrifices should be offered by a proper priest at the sole legitimate altar.

6. the priest may dash the blood Concern for the proper use of sacrificial blood is basic to the regulations of chapter 17. The designation of the tabernacle altar as “the altar of the LORD” is based on the view that there is only one legitimate altar at which the God of Israel may be worshiped.

7. offer their sacrifices no more to the goat-demons The law is intended to uproot prior religious customs and to enforce strict adherence to the monotheistic religion of Israel.

CHAPTER 17

4. These rules about bringing animals to the central altar to be dispatched rest on the premise that slaughtering animals for food should never be a callous or a casual act. The Torah inculcates in us a horror of shedding blood, even the blood of animals. It would seem that, for the Torah, vegetarianism is the human

ideal (see Gen. 1:30, 9:1–7), and that eating meat, taking the life of a living creature for our dinner, is a concession to human appetite. These rules extend the Jewish dietary laws to forbid not only prohibited species but even permitted species that have been killed by other beasts or have died of natural causes. They also prohibit ingesting the blood even of properly slaughtered animals.

⁸Say to them further: If anyone of the house of Israel or of the strangers who reside among them offers a burnt offering or a sacrifice, ⁹and does not bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting to offer it to the LORD, that person shall be cut off from his people.

¹⁰And if anyone of the house of Israel or of the strangers who reside among them partakes of any blood, I will set My face against the person who partakes of the blood, and I will cut him off from among his kin. ¹¹For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have assigned it to you for making expiation for your lives upon the altar; it is the blood, as life, that effects expiation. ¹²Therefore I say to the Israelite people: No person among you shall partake of blood, nor shall the stranger who resides among you partake of blood.

¹³And if any Israelite or any stranger who resides among them hunts down an animal or a bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. ¹⁴For the life of all flesh—its blood is its life. Therefore I say to the Israelite people: You shall not partake of the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Anyone who partakes of it shall be cut off.

¹⁵Any person, whether citizen or stranger, who eats what has died or has been torn by

8 וְאֵלֵיהֶם תֹּאמַר אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן־הַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר־יִגְוֹר בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲלֶה עֲלָה אוֹזֵבַח: 9 וְאֵל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא יְבִיאֲנּוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ לַיהוָה וְנִכְרַת הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מֵעַמּוֹ:

10 וְאִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן־הַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֲשֶׁר יֹאכַל כָּל־דָּם וְנָתַתִּי פָנַי בְּנַפְשׁ הָאֹכֵלֶת אֶת־הַדָּם וְהִכְרַתִּי אֹתָהּ מִקֶּרֶב עַמָּהּ: 11 כִּי נַפֶּשׁ הַבֶּשֶׂר בַּדָּם הוּא וְאֲנִי נָתַתִּיו לָכֶם עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְכַפֵּר עַל־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם כִּי־הֵדֵם הוּא בְּנַפֶּשׁ יִכַּפֵּר: 12 עַל־כֵּן אֶמְרָתִי לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל־נַפֶּשׁ מִמֶּם לֹא־תֹאכַל דָּם וְהַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם לֹא־יֹאכַל דָּם: ט

13 וְאִישׁ אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן־הַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֲשֶׁר יִצְוֹד יְצִוֵּד חַיָּה אוֹ־עוֹף אֲשֶׁר יֹאכַל וְשִׁפָּף אֶת־דָּמּוֹ וְכִסָּהּ בַּעֲפָר: 14 כִּי־נַפֶּשׁ כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר דָּמּוֹ בְּנַפְשׁוֹ הוּא וְאֹמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דָּם כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר לֹא תֹאכְלוּ כִּי נַפֶּשׁ כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר דָּמּוֹ הוּא כָּל־אֹכְלָיו יִכְרַת:

15 וְכָל־נַפֶּשׁ אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל נְבֵלָה וּטְרֵפָה

8–9. Sacrifices are to be outlawed everywhere except at the tabernacle altar.

10. The blood is to be dashed against the altar.

11. For the life of the flesh is in the blood This is repeated in verse 14. Similar formulations occur in Gen. 9:4 and Deut. 12:23.

it is the blood, as life, that effects expiation Blood represents life; living beings cannot exist without blood. Thus the blood of the sacrifice offered on the altar is the “life” of the sacrifice. God

accepts it in place of human life and grants expiation or refrains from wrath.

12. This is a restatement of the blood prohibition, for emphasis.

13. Animals and fowl could be hunted for sustenance, not sport. Their blood, however, had to be drained before the meat could be eaten.

15. Eating flesh of carcasses or torn animals is forbidden. Tactile contact with carcasses renders one impure and requires purificatory ablutions.

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17:10. partakes of any blood Blood must be removed from meat before it is fit for eating. This is done through a special method of slaughtering (*sh'hitah*); removing certain prohibited parts of the animal; and salting, soaking, and rinsing the meat. Kosher butchers usually salt and soak the meat, a procedure once performed at home. If meat is broiled, salting and soaking are unnecessary, and liver must be broiled to be kosher.

beasts shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening; then he shall be pure. ¹⁶But if he does not wash [his clothes] and bathe his body, he shall bear his guilt.

בְּאֶזְרָח וּבְגֵר וּכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב וְטָהַר: ¹⁶ וְאִם לֹא יְכַבֵּס וּבִשְׂרוֹ לֹא יִרְחַץ וְנָשָׂא עֲוֹנוֹ: פ

18 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: I the LORD am your God. ³You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, or of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you; nor shall you follow their laws. ⁴My rules alone shall you observe, and

יח וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ² דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ³ כַּמַּעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁבַּתְּם-בָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וְכַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ-כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְבִיא אֲתֶכֶם שָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּבְחֻקֵּיהֶם לֹא תֵלְכוּ: ⁴ אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי תַעֲשׂוּ וְאֶת-

DEFINITION OF THE FAMILY (18:1–30)

2. the Israelite people The regulations of this chapter are meant to govern the conduct of the entire people.

I the LORD am your God The commandments come directly from God and are to be obeyed with utmost strictness.

3. At certain periods in the history of ancient

Egypt, it was the custom among the royal class to encourage brother-sister marriages. Other prohibited acts found in this chapter, such as homosexuality and bestiality, at times were apparently practiced in Canaanite culture.

4. faithfully follow My laws The Hebrew for “follow” (הלך) means “to go, walk.” It often

CHAPTER 18

Incest laws, prohibiting people from sexual contact with their closest relatives and underscoring those prohibitions in the strongest terms, are virtually universal in all ancient and modern societies. What is the basis for these laws? One doubts that they grew out of an observation that marrying close relatives could lead to the birth of deformed children bearing the results of recessive genetic defects. There is no evidence that primitive societies, which had incest laws, understood physical deformity in genetic terms. Nor would such an observation have inspired the sense of profound disgust and perversion with which incestuous acts were regarded. Rather, one suspects that incest laws were meant to make it clear that members of the opposite sex in one’s household are not to be considered as possible sexual partners. A household would become impossibly “overheated” if sexually mature brothers and sisters, parents and children could regard each other as sexually available. This would

explain the anomaly in the text (18:12–14) that a woman may marry her uncle (indeed that was often a preferred match) although a man could not marry his aunt. The family relationship is the same, but presumably the unmarried aunt might live in the same household while the unmarried uncle would have his own home elsewhere.

3. nor shall you follow their laws One senses here the Torah’s revulsion at the erotic component of pagan society. Some commentators take these words to mean that we may not imitate the gentile nations even in innocuous matters, such as the clothing we wear (*S’fat Emet*). Hirsch, on the other hand, maintains: “We may imitate the nations among whom we live in things that are based on reason but not on things relating to religion or superstition.” The Sages of the Talmud make it clear that Jews are to obey the civil laws of the lands in which they live (“the law of the [gentile] government is binding,” *dina d’malkhuta dina*, BT Git. 10b), even as we are to separate ourselves from their religious ways.

faithfully follow My laws: I the LORD am your God.

⁵You shall keep My laws and My rules, by the pursuit of which man shall live: I am the LORD.

⁶None of you shall come near anyone of his own flesh to uncover nakedness: I am the LORD.

⁷Your father's nakedness, that is, the nakedness of your mother, you shall not uncover; she is your mother—you shall not uncover her nakedness.

⁸Do not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is the nakedness of your father.

⁹The nakedness of your sister—your father's daughter or your mother's, whether born into

חֻקֵי תִשְׁמְרוּ לְלִבְתּוֹ בָּהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲלֵהֵיכֶם :

וּשְׁמֵרְתֶם אֶת־חֻקֵי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וְחֵי בָהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה : ס

אִישׁ אִישׁ אֶל־כָּל־שָׂאֵר בְּשָׂרוֹ לֹא תִקְרְבוּ לְגִלּוֹת עֲרוּה אֲנִי יְהוָה : ס

עֲרוֹת אָבִיךָ וְעֲרוֹת אִמְךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה אִמְךָ הוּא לֹא תִגְלֶה עֲרוֹתָה : ס

עֲרוֹת אִשְׁת־אָבִיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה עֲרוֹת אָבִיךָ הוּא : ס

עֲרוֹת אַחֹתְךָ בֵּת־אָבִיךָ אוֹ בֵּת־אִמְךָ

is used to connote adherence to God's commandments.

7. This verse forbids sexual relations with one's natural mother (Ramban).

8. the nakedness of your father's wife This refers to one who has sexual relations with a wife of his father who is not his natural mother.

9. whether born into the household or outside

The ancient Aramaic translation renders: "who is born from your father by another woman, or by your mother from another man" (Onk.). In other words, your father's daughter was born into your

5. by the pursuit of which man shall live This important verse later became the basis for defining the limits of martyrdom (BT Yoma 85b). Only in cases of murder, incest, adultery, or idolatry must a Jew give up his or her life rather than violate the commandments. In all other cases, one must violate the Torah to spare one's life—in order to live by the Torah afterward.

Maimonides gives the words a deeper meaning: The wicked are considered as dead even in their lifetimes because they are not fulfilling their innate mission to live by God's laws. They do not understand what it means to be truly alive. A 19th-century Hasidic master understood the words homiletically to mean, "Keep God's laws while you are young and vigorous. Do not wait to become pious when you are old and the urge to sin has fled."

6. In the Torah, "to uncover the nakedness" is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. It may also serve to imply that, in a society where people dressed modestly, seeing a person undressed would inevitably lead to sexual contact. Nakedness, and the uncovering of nakedness, is a category that applies only to human beings. Only humans wear clothing, because only human beings have a sense of shame, of being judged (cf. Gen. 3). Judaism traditionally calls for modesty in dress, not only to avoid temptation but as a statement about the holiness of the body and at the same time a rejection of the pagan worship of the naked human form. Only human beings are motivated to cover certain parts of their bodies out of reverence for the power of those organs to create and sustain life. Similarly, only human beings can think in terms of "suitable marriage partners."

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

18:5. by the pursuit of which man shall live Except for the prohibitions against murder, incest and adultery, and idolatry, any commandment must be set aside for *pikku'ah nefesh*, to save a human life (BT Sanh. 74a). Thus one may violate *Shabbat* to take someone to the hospital in an emergency, and doctors must not hesitate to violate the laws of *Shabbat* to save a life. Israel's armed forces rely on this principle to defend Israel from attack on *Shabbat* and holy days. See Comment to Exod. 22:1.

18:9. your sister This verse is understood to prohibit relations with all siblings. The CJLS has ruled that sexual relations and marriages between adopted children raised in the same family are also prohibited.

the household or outside—do not uncover their nakedness.

¹⁰The nakedness of your son's daughter, or of your daughter's daughter—do not uncover their nakedness; for their nakedness is yours.

¹¹The nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, who was born into your father's household—she is your sister; do not uncover her nakedness.

¹²Do not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is your father's flesh.

¹³Do not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister; for she is your mother's flesh.

¹⁴Do not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother: do not approach his wife; she is your aunt.

¹⁵Do not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law: she is your son's wife; you shall not uncover her nakedness.

¹⁶Do not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is the nakedness of your brother.

¹⁷Do not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter; nor shall you marry her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter and uncover her nakedness: they are kindred; it is depravity.

¹⁸Do not marry a woman as a rival to her sister and uncover her nakedness in the other's lifetime.

¹⁹Do not come near a woman during her period of impurity to uncover her nakedness.

household, whereas your mother's daughter was born outside of it at a time when your mother was not part of your father's household.

10. It is not clear why the prohibition of union with one's own daughter was not made explicit, but for the Sages it was obvious that such a union would be incestuous.

11. your father's wife's daughter A half-sister with whom one shares a common father but not the same mother.

15. daughter-in-law The basic meaning of the Hebrew word *kallah* is "daughter-in-law." Usage, however, was fluid. Viewed from the per-

מִוֹלַדֵּת בֵּית אִו מוֹלַדֵּת חוּץ לֹא תִגְלֶה עֵרוֹתָן: ס

10 עֵרוֹת בֵּת-בְּנֵהָ אִו בֵּת-בִּתְּהָ לֹא תִגְלֶה עֵרוֹתָן כִּי עֵרוֹתֶהָ הִנֵּה: ס

11 עֵרוֹת בֵּת-אִשְׁתֵּךְ אָבִיךָ מוֹלַדֵּת אָבִיךָ אַחֻוֹתֶיךָ הִוא לֹא תִגְלֶה עֵרוֹתֶיהָ: ס

12 עֵרוֹת אַחֻוֹת-אָבִיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה שְׂאֵר אָבִיךָ הִוא: ס

13 עֵרוֹת אַחֻוֹת-אִמֶּךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה כִּי-שְׂאֵר אִמֶּךָ הִוא: ס

14 עֵרוֹת אַחֻי-אָבִיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה אֶל-אִשְׁתּוֹ לֹא תִקְרָב דְּדֹתְךָ הִוא: ס

15 עֵרוֹת כִּלְתֶּךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה אִשְׁתֵּךְ בְּנֵהָ הִוא לֹא תִגְלֶה עֵרוֹתֶיהָ: ס

16 עֵרוֹת אִשְׁת־אֲחִיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה עֵרוֹת אֲחִיךָ הִוא: ס

17 עֵרוֹת אִשָּׁה וּבִתָּהּ לֹא תִגְלֶה אֶת-בֵּת-בְּנֵהָ וְאֶת-בֵּת-בִּתְּהָ לֹא תִקַּח לְגִלּוֹת עֵרוֹתֶיהָ שְׂאֵרָה הִנֵּה וְזֵמָה הִוא:

18 וְאִשָּׁה אֶל-אַחֻתָּהּ לֹא תִקַּח לְצִוֵּר לְגִלּוֹת עֵרוֹתֶיהָ עָלֶיהָ בְּחַיֶּיהָ:

19 וְאֶל-אִשָּׁה בְּנִדַת טְמֵאָתָהּ לֹא תִקְרָב לְגִלּוֹת עֵרוֹתֶיהָ:

spective of the son's generation, *kallah* is "bride," just as the masculine counterpart *hatan* means both "son-in-law" and "bridegroom."

18. a woman as a rival to her sister In polygamous marriages, the interests of the several wives inevitably came into conflict.

in the other's lifetime Marrying two sisters would create a damaging rivalry. The prohibition continues as long as the first sister remains alive, even if divorced from the man in question.

19. her period of impurity This refers to her menstrual period.

²⁰Do not have carnal relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her.

²¹Do not allow any of your offspring to be offered up to Molech, and do not profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

²²Do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman; it is an abhorrence.

²³Do not have carnal relations with any beast and defile yourself thereby; and let no woman lend herself to a beast to mate with it; it is perversion.

²⁴Do not defile yourselves in any of those ways, for it is by such that the nations that I am casting out before you defiled themselves.

²⁵Thus the land became defiled; and I called it

וְאֶל-אִשְׁתְּ עֵמִיתְךָ לֹא-תִתֵּן שְׂכָבְתֶךָ
לְזָרַע לְטַמְאָה-בָּהּ:

וּמִזְרַעְךָ לֹא-תִתֵּן לְהַעֲבִיר לַמֶּלֶךְ וְלֹא
תַחֲלֵל אֶת-שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

וְאֶת-זָכָר לֹא תִשָּׁבּ מִשְׂכְּבֵי אִשָּׁה
תוֹעֵבָה הוּא:

וּבְכָל-בְּהֵמָה לֹא-תִתֵּן שְׂכָבְתֶךָ
לְטַמְאָה-בָּהּ וְאִשָּׁה לֹא-תַעֲמֹד לְפָנָי
בְּהֵמָה לְרִבְעָה תִבֵּל הוּא:

אֶל-תִּטְמְאוּ בְּכָל-אֱלֹהֵי כִּי בְּכָל-אֱלֹהֵי
נְטָמָאוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-אֲנִי מְשַׁלַּח מִפְּנֵיכֶם:

וַתִּטְמָא הָאָרֶץ וְאֶפְקַד עֹנָה עָלֶיהָ

שביעי
[רביעי]

21. offered up to Molech Molech is the name given to a deity worshiped by some of Israel's ancient neighbors. Some scholars believe that this is intended to prohibit the sacrifice of children to the God of Israel.

22. Aside from this verse and its parallel in 20:13, the Bible mentions homosexuality only in the context of rape (Gen. 19:5, Judg. 19:22) and apparently with regard to prostitution (Deut. 23:18–19). In its condemnation here, the Torah uses the word *to-eivah*, which appears more than one hundred

times in the Bible to describe an object or act as repulsive.

23. let no woman The only instance in this chapter where women are the subject of the commandment.

perversion Hebrew: *tevel*, derived from the root בלל (to mix), implying that sex with beasts is a forbidden "mixture" of species.

25. the land became defiled Those who violate the code of family life commit an outrage that defiles the land; and the angry land may, in turn, spew them out.

21. For Hirsch, Molech represents a vision of God as blind fate, a god who does not represent or demand righteousness but wants only obedience. We might take this prohibition as

a warning against sacrificing the integrity of our children on the altars of fame or material success.

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18:22. Do not lie with a male Many biblical scholars understand this verse to forbid only male anal sex, but the Sages expanded the prohibition to include other forms of male homosexual sex and female homosexual sex as well (*Sifra Aharei Mot* 9:8). These prohibitions have engendered considerable debate within the CJLS and the movement as a whole. Some rabbis and congregants believe that these prohibitions should stand as they are, while others say that they should be narrowed to prohibit only what the Torah does, and still others hold that they should be abrogated altogether. Despite such varied views on homosexuality per se, the CJLS is wholly in accord with Conservative Movement resolutions that deplore violence against gay and lesbian persons, that endorse full equality for gays and lesbians in civil law, and that call on congregations to welcome gay and lesbian Jews in all aspects of synagogue life.

to account for its iniquity, and the land spewed out its inhabitants.²⁶ But you must keep My laws and My rules, and you must not do any of those abhorrent things, neither the citizen nor the stranger who resides among you;²⁷ for all those abhorrent things were done by the people who were in the land before you, and the land became defiled.²⁸ So let not the land spew you out for defiling it, as it spewed out the nation that came before you.²⁹ All who do any of those abhorrent things—such persons shall be cut off from their people.³⁰ You shall keep My charge not to engage in any of the abhorrent practices that were carried on before you, and you shall not defile yourselves through them: I the LORD am your God.

26. neither the citizen nor the stranger who resides among you The objective of establishing a holy community requires that all who live

וּתְקַא הָאָרֶץ אֶת־יִשְׁבֵּיהָ: ²⁶ וּשְׁמֵרְתֶם אֹתָם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ מִכֹּל הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה הָאֲזֹרָח וְהַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם: ²⁷ כִּי אֶת־כָּל־הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת הָאֵל עָשׂוּ אֲנָשֵׁי־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵיכֶם וַתִּטְמָא הָאָרֶץ: ²⁸ וְלֹא־תִקְיֵא הָאָרֶץ אֶתְכֶם בְּטִמְאַכֶם אֹתָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר קָאָה אֶת־הַגֵּוִי אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵיכֶם: ²⁹ כִּי כָל־אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה מִכֹּל הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְנִכְרְתוּ הַנִּפְשׁוֹת הַעֲשׂוֹת מִקְרֵב עִמָּם: ³⁰ וּשְׁמֵרְתֶם אֶת־מִשְׁמֵרְתֵי לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת מִחֻקֹּת הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשׂוּ לִפְנֵיכֶם וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: * פ

within it, both Israelites and aliens, uphold a standard of proper sexual behavior.

30. You shall keep My charge The Hebrew verb for “keep” can also be translated “guard/protect.” That dimension of the command led the Sages to the concept of “making a fence around the Torah,” expanding the domain of the prohibited to protect the Torah from inadvertent violation.

The theme of Leviticus has been the striving of human beings to come into God’s presence in a state of holiness, through animal offerings, through the avoidance of contact with defiling substances or behavior associated with the pagan world. This focus on holiness reaches its peak in the next *parashah*, *K’doshim*.

* For the haftarah for this Torah portion, see selections starting on p. 705.

19

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
 2Speak to the whole Israelite community and
 say to them:

You shall be holy, for I, the LORD your God,
 am holy.

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
 2 דַּבֵּר אֶל־כָּל־עַדְת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ
 אֲלֵהֶם
 קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה
 אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

The Pursuit of Holiness (continued)

LAWS OF HOLINESS (19:1–37)

This chapter, which echoes the Decalogue, states
 the duties incumbent on the Israelites as a people.

2. You shall be holy The Hebrew is quite
 emphatic: “You must be holy!”

CHAPTER 19

This *parashah*, one of the richest and most exalted in the Torah, begins with the words “you shall be holy” (*k’doshim tihyu*). What is holiness? The term can be applied to God, to good people, to a book, to a period of time, or to an animal offered as a sacrifice. To be holy is to be different, to be set apart from the ordinary. “Ordinary” (*hol*) is often used as the opposite of “holy” in rabbinic discourse. To be holy is to rise to partake in some measure of the special qualities of God, the source of holiness. Holiness is the highest level of human behavior, human beings at their most Godlike. Hirsch defines holiness as occurring “when a morally free human being has complete dominion over one’s own energies and inclinations and the temptations associated with them, and places them at the service of God’s will.” For Buber, holiness is found not in rising above the level of one’s neighbors but in relationships, in human beings recognizing the latent divinity of other people, even as God recognizes the latent divinity in each of us. God can make things holy, as in the case of *Shabbat* (Gen. 2:3). As human beings, we can be Godlike by exercising our power to sanctify moments and objects in our lives.

Time can be sanctified when it is used to draw closer to God. Objects can become holy when they help people rise toward God. The Torah is holy not only because it comes from God but because it leads to God.

It should also be noted that the *mitzvot* of Lev. 19, the laws of holiness, cut across all categories of life. They deal with ritual, with business ethics, with proper behavior toward the

poor and the afflicted, and with family relations. The modern distinction between “religious” and “secular” is unknown to the Torah. Everything we do has the potential of being holy. Buber wrote that Judaism does not divide life into the holy and the profane, but into the holy and the not-yet-holy. Similarly, Finkelstein writes: “Judaism is a way of life that endeavors to transform virtually every human action into a means of communion with God.”

The Talmud (BT Yev. 20a) enunciates the important principle of “achieve holiness within the realm of the permitted” (*kadesh et atzm’kha ba-muttar l’kha*). Go beyond obeying the letter of the law and refraining from what is forbidden by finding ways of sanctifying every moment of your life. We can be as holy as we allow ourselves to be. Ramban warns against the person who manages to lead an unworthy life without technically breaking any of the Torah’s rules. Such a person is called *naval birshut ha-Torah*, “a scoundrel within the bounds of Torah.”

2. You shall be holy In Hebrew, this summons is phrased in the plural, implying that the capacity for holiness is not restricted to spiritually gifted people; anyone may attain holiness. God does not demand the impossible. The plural phrasing suggests further that holiness is most easily achieved in the context of a community. It is difficult for a person to live a life of holiness without others. Noah wasn’t able to do it; even Abraham lapsed into unworthy behavior when surrounded by people who were not striving for holiness as he was (cf. Gen. 12, 20). When a community dedicates itself to the pursuit of holiness, its members sup-

³You shall each revere his mother and his father, and keep My sabbaths: I the LORD am your God.

⁴Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves: I the LORD am your God.

⁵When you sacrifice an offering of well-being to the LORD, sacrifice it so that it may be accepted on your behalf. ⁶It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it, or on the day following; but what is left by the third day must be consumed in fire. ⁷If it should be eaten on the third day, it is an offensive thing, it will not be acceptable. ⁸And he who eats of it shall bear his guilt, for he has profaned what is sacred to the LORD; that person shall be cut off from his kin.

⁹When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your

3 אִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :
 4 אֶל־תִּפְנוּ אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶל־הַמַּסֻּכָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :
 5 וְכִי תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם תִּזְבְּחֶהוּ : 6 בְּיוֹם זִבְחֵכֶם יֹאכַל וּמִמַּחֲרַת וְהַנּוֹתָר עַד־יוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בְּאֵשׁ יִשָּׂרָף :
 7 וְאִם הָאֵכָל יֹאכַל בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי פְּגוּל הוּא לֹא יִרְצָה : 8 וְאֵכְלוֹ עֲוֹנוֹ יִשָּׂא בִּי־אֶת־קֹדֶשׁ יְהוָה חָלַל וְנִכְרַתָּה הַגִּפְּטָה הַהוּא מֵעַמִּי :
 9 וּבִקְצָרְכֶם אֶת־קְצִיר אֲרֻצְכֶם לֹא תִכְלֶה

3. mother and . . . father In the Fifth Commandment, father precedes mother. The two statements, when combined, amount to an equitable estimation of both parents.

5–8. These verses are addressed primarily to the individual Israelites who donated *sh'lamim* sacrifices to God.

9–10. These verses require that some pro-

port and reinforce each other. Historically, when Jewish communities have been at their best, the whole became greater than the sum of its parts. Ordinary people achieved an extraordinary measure of sanctity in their daily lives.

“You shall be holy” has been understood by some not as a command but as a promise: Live by these rules and your life will become special in the process. Your fundamental need for significance, for the assurance that your life has meaning, will be met thereby (Hatan Sofer). For Heschel, “Judaism is an attempt to prove that in order to be a man, you have to be more than a man, that in order to be a people, you have to be more than a people. Israel was made to be a holy people.”

3. A person need not obey a parent’s directive to violate the Torah. However, if it is found necessary to disobey parents in this way, it must be done with respect and reverence (*Sifra*). The fifth commandment of the Decalogue tells us to “honor your father and

mother.” This verse calls on us to “revere (one’s) mother and father.” Rashi suggests that the natural instinct is to revere (i.e., fear) one’s father and to honor (i.e., love) one’s mother. The Torah would have us regard each of our parents equally with reverence and love and would have each parent represent both discipline and forgiveness in the child’s mind.

5–10. The command to consume the *sh'lamim* (offering of well-being) within two days is meant to encourage the donor to invite the poor to share in the meal. Similarly, the subsequent command to leave the corner of the field and the fallen fruit is motivated by the desire to have us share our bounty with the poor. Even a poor person, owner of a small field, must leave a corner of the harvest for others. The biblical story of Ruth, read on *Shavu-ot*, turns on Ruth’s right to glean in the fields of her affluent neighbors. “To care for the poor, who are fashioned in God’s image, is a form of worship” (Hoffman).

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19:3. revere his mother and his father According to the Talmud, this requires, for example, that we refrain from publicly challenging what our parents have said and from sitting in their chair (BT Kid. 31a–b). See Comments to Exod. 20:12; Deut. 21:18–21.

field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest.
 10You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the LORD am your God.

11You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another. 12You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD.

13You shall not defraud your fellow. You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning.

14You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

פֶּאת שְׂדֵךְ לִקְצֹר וְלִקְטֹף קְצִירְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט :
 10 וְכִרְמֶךָ לֹא תַעֲזֹל וּפְרֹט בְּרִמְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט לְעֵנִי וְלִגְר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :

11 לֹא תִגְנֹבוּ וְלֹא תִכְחָשׂוּ וְלֹא תִשְׁקְרוּ אִישׁ בְּעַמִּיתוֹ : 12 וְלֹא תִשְׁבְּעוּ בִשְׁמִי לִשְׁקֹר וְחָלַלְתָּ אֶת־שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה :

13 לֹא תַעֲשֶׂק אֶת־רֵעֶךָ וְלֹא תִגְזֹל לֹא תִלִּין פְּעֻלַת שְׂכִיר אֶתְךָ עַד־בֹּקֶר :

14 לֹא תִקְלַל חֵרֶשׁ וּלְפָנָי עוֹר לֹא תִתֵּן מִכְשָׁל וְיִרְאֵת מִאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה :

שני
[חמישי]

duce from the harvest of field and vineyard be reserved for the poor and the stranger. Four types of gifts are specified: two from the grain harvest and two from the vineyards.

your vineyard Underdeveloped clusters of grapes must be left unpicked until they mature. At that time, only the poor and the stranger may pick them. Fruit that falls to the ground during picking is to be left unpicked.

11. You shall not steal This parallels the Eighth Commandment.

you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with

one another This approximates the significance of the Ninth Commandment.

12. You shall not swear falsely by My name This parallels the Third Commandment.

profaning the name of your God Oaths are sworn in God's name, and one who swears falsely treats God's name as if it were not holy.

14. You shall not insult the deaf Speaking ill of the deaf is especially blameworthy because it involves taking unfair advantage of another's disability.

a stumbling block before the blind Cf. Deut.

11. The words "you shall not steal" follow directly after the laws of leaving part of the harvest for the poor. Does this teach that keeping everything for ourselves is a form of stealing (Ibn Ezra)? Or are we commanded to help the poor find enough to eat so that they will not be driven to steal (Kara)?

12–13. Hoffman notes that sometimes within a single verse, some verbs will be in the singular and others in the plural. He suggests that it is the obligation of the community as a whole to create a moral climate that will make it easier for an individual to do what is right and make it less socially acceptable for an individ-

ual to sin. The law can only forbid and punish; the knowledge that one's neighbors will disapprove may be a more effective deterrent.

14. You shall not insult the deaf You shall not insult anyone, even a deaf person whose feelings will not be hurt by your words (BT Shevu. 36a), because the use of coarse language diminishes you as a person. Maimonides, ever the rationalist, takes the words of the Torah as a warning, lest we see that our words do not affect the deaf person and we resort to physical violence.

stumbling block before the blind "The term 'blind' refers not only to one who is phys-

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19:10. for the poor and the stranger See Comments to Lev. 25:25,35.

19:13. You shall not defraud See Comments to Exod. 23:7; Lev. 19:36.

19:14. stumbling block before the blind The Sages understand this as a prohibition against creating conditions that might tempt another person to transgress the Commandments, including those governing rituals (e.g., BT Pes. 22b), moral interactions (e.g., BT MK 17b), and commercial matters (e.g., BT BM 75a). It also forbids knowingly giving bad advice (*Sifra*).

¹⁵You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your kinsman fairly. ¹⁶Do not deal basely with your countrymen. Do not profit by the blood of your fellow: I am the LORD.

¹⁷You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt

לֹא-תַעֲשׂוּ עֵוֹל בַּמִּשְׁפָּט לֹא-תִשָּׂא פָנֶי-¹⁵ שני [חמישי]
 דָּל וְלֹא תִהְיֶה פָנֶי גְדוֹל בְּצַדֵּק תִּשְׁפֹּט
 עִמִּיתְךָ: ¹⁶ לֹא-תִלְךָ רְכִיל בְּעַמִּיךָ לֹא
 תַעֲמֹד עַל-דַּם רֵעֶךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:
¹⁷ לֹא-תִשָּׂא אֶת-אָחִיךָ בַלְבָבְךָ הוֹכֵחַ
 תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת-עַמִּיתְךָ וְלֹא-תִשָּׂא עָלָיו

27:18: “Cursed be he who misdirects a blind person on his way.”

15. do not favor the poor In the pursuit of justice there can be no bias, even toward those for whom we have innate sympathy and who otherwise deserve our aid.

16. Do not deal basely with your countrymen Literally, “Do not act as a merchant toward your own kinsmen.” A traveling merchant has fairly easy access to secret information and gossip. Here, no one should traffic in such information.

Do not profit by the blood of your fellow

This has been interpreted in various ways. The rendering that best fits the context is: Do not pursue one’s livelihood in a way that endangers another or at the expense of another’s well-being.

17. You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart Do not allow ill feelings to fester.

Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt because of him In other words, admonish your neighbor for his or her wrongdoing so that you will not incur guilt on your neighbor’s account.

ically blind but also to one who is intellectually deficient, lacking appropriate information, or morally blinded by emotions” (Hirsch). For example, one violates this law by deliberately giving bad advice (*Sifra*), by providing someone with the means to do wrong whom you know cannot resist the temptation (BT Pes. 22b), or by provoking a short-tempered person to lash out in anger (BT Kid. 32a).

You shall fear your God “Whenever this phrase is used, it refers to something entrusted to the conscience of the individual, to those acts that are beyond the jurisdiction of an earthly court. Only the individual conscience can know whether or not an act was committed in good faith” (N. Leibowitz, based on Rashi and *Sifra*).

15. do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich Once again, as in Exod. 23:3, the Torah emphasizes that the poor are better served by justice uncompromised by emotion. Hirsch sees this verse as directed to judges and verse 16 (“do not deal basely”) directed to the community at large. Judges must adhere to the law and not favor the poor, and others are

obliged to reach out to the poor in charity. Love and compassion can supplement the rule of law, but cannot replace it.

17. You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart The literal meaning of “your kinsfolk” is “your brother.” The following verse speaks of loving one’s neighbor, and this verse prohibits hating one’s brother. Hirsch suggests that though we can lose the status of being a friend or a neighbor (by quarreling, by moving away), we can never stop being related to a brother, even if he hurts us. Therefore, we are forbidden to hate him. This is one of the rare instances when the Torah seems to command feelings rather than behavior.

Reprove your kinsman The Sages forbid carrying reproach to the point of embarrassing someone, thus incurring guilt because of that exchange, something that is forbidden by the Torah (*Sifra*). The obligation to reprove is limited to cases in which one has reason to believe the reproof will bring about a change in behavior. It should always be a loving rebuke, never an occasion to belittle another for errant behavior.

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19:16. Do not deal basely See Comment to Exod. 23:1.

Do not profit The Talmud understands this verse to prohibit “standing by the blood of your fellow,” ruling it an obligation to help someone in distress, for example, a person drowning (BT Sanh. 73a). Based on this precedent, CJLS has ruled that Jews should donate blood regularly and arrange to have one’s organs donated for transplant after death.

because of him. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the LORD.

¹⁹You shall observe My laws.

You shall not let your cattle mate with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; you shall not put on cloth from a mixture of two kinds of material.

18. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge You must not keep alive the memory of another's offense against you.

Love your fellow as yourself The great sage Akiva referred to this as "a basic principle in the Torah."

18. take vengeance . . . bear a grudge Vengeance has been defined as saying, "I will not lend you my hammer because you broke my saw," and bearing a grudge as saying, "I will lend you my hammer even though you broke my saw." It has been recalled that the Eastern European sage Saul Katzenellenbogen had such a prodigious memory that he never forgot anything he read or heard. Invariably, however, he would forget when someone offended him.

Love your fellow as yourself When Hillel was asked by a gentile to summarize the Torah in one sentence, he offered a version of this: "What is distasteful to you, don't do to another person. The rest is commentary; now go study the commentary" (BT Shab. 31a). Love your neighbor because he or she is like yourself, subject to the same temptations that you are. Just as we excuse our own behavior by seeing it in context, claiming that we were tired, angry, or misinformed and, therefore, guilty of nothing worse than poor judgment, we should be prepared to judge the behavior of others as charitably.

Buber understood this commandment as being connected to the preceding one, "you shall not take vengeance." Because all human beings are part of the same body, to hurt another person in an effort to get even is to hurt part of oneself. He compares it to a person whose hand slips while holding a knife and he stabs himself. Should he stab the offending hand that slipped, to get even with it for hurting him? He will only hurt himself a second time. So it is when we, in anger, hurt another person, not understanding that we are all connected. Anger and a thirst for vengeance corrode the soul.

חָטָא: ¹⁸ לֹא-תִקֶּם וְלֹא-תִטּוֹר אֶת-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאֶהְבֵּת לְרֵעֶךָ כַּמּוֹךְ אֲנִי יְהוָה: ¹⁹ אֶת-חֻקֹּתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ

בְּהִמְתָּךְ לֹא-תִרְבִּיעַ כְּלָאִים שְׂדֵךְ לֹא-תִזְרַע כְּלָאִים וּבְגָד כְּלָאִים שֶׁעֲטָנָז לֹא יַעֲלֶה עֲלֶיךָ: פ

19. You shall observe My laws This statement introduces the specific laws that follow.

a different kind Hebrew: *kil-ayim*, which has been explained on the basis of other Semitic languages as meaning "two kinds (together)." The term is used of animals, plants, grain, and cloth.

19. The Sages understand *hukkim* (translated here as "laws") as referring to rules for which there seems to be no rational explanation. We follow them, not because they make sense (as do laws forbidding murder or commanding rest on *Shabbat*) but as opportunities to do God's will. When a Jew follows God's command without understanding the reason for it, we can understand the relationship in one of three ways: (a) as that of slave to master, with obedience compelled; (b) as that of pupil to teacher, in which the pupil assumes that the teacher knows what is right and necessary even if the pupil cannot see the point of it, although the pupil may hope one day to understand it; or (c) as that of people in love, in which one takes pleasure in knowing what he or she can do to please the beloved. Conservative Judaism tends to give the tradition the benefit of the doubt when it baffles us but does not morally offend us. When the tradition asks us to do something that does offend us morally, Conservative Judaism claims the right to challenge and, if necessary, change the tradition, not because we see our judgment as superior to that of the Torah but because our judgment has been shaped by the values of the Torah and we are in effect calling the Torah to judge itself. "We affirm that the halakhic process has striven to embody the highest moral principles. Where changing conditions produce what seem to be immoral consequences and human anguish, varying approaches exist within our community to rectify the situation" (*Emet Ve-Emunah*).

This verse contains three prohibitions on mixing categories, something the Torah often forbids as a way of tampering with the divinely

20If a man has carnal relations with a woman who is a slave and has been designated for another man, but has not been redeemed or given her freedom, there shall be an indemnity; they shall not, however, be put to death, since she has not been freed. 21But he must bring to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, as his reparation offering to the LORD, a ram of reparation offering. 22With the ram of reparation offering the priest shall make expiation for him before the LORD for the sin that he committed; and the sin that he committed will be forgiven him.

23When you enter the land and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten. 24In the fourth year all its fruit shall be set aside for jubilation before the LORD; 25and

וְאִישׁ כִּי־יִשְׁכַּב אֶת־אִשָּׁה שְׂכֵמֶת־זָרָה
וְהוּא שִׁפְחָהּ נִחְרַפְתָּ לְאִישׁ וְהַפְדָּהּ לֹא
נִפְדָּתָה אוֹ חִפְשָׁהּ לֹא נָתַן־לָהּ בְּקִרְתָּ
תִּהְיֶה לֹא יוֹמְתוֹ כִּי־לֹא חִפְשָׁהּ: 21 וְהֵבִיא
אֶת־אֲשָׁמוֹ לַיהוָה אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד
אֵיל אֲשָׁם: 22 וּכְפָר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן בְּאֵיל
הָאֲשָׁם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה עַל־חַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא
וְנִסְלַח לוֹ מִחַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָטָא: פ
וְכִי־תִבְאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ וְנִטְעַתֶּם כָּל־עֵץ
מֵאֲכָל וְעַרְלַתֶּם עַרְלָתוֹ אֶת־פְּרִיּוֹ שְׁלֹשׁ
שָׁנִים יִהְיֶה לָכֶם עֲרָלִים לֹא יֵאָכַל:
וּבַשָּׁנָה הָרְבִיעִת יִהְיֶה כָּל־פְּרִיּוֹ קֹדֶשׁ
הַלְלוּלִים לַיהוָה: 25 וּבַשָּׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁת

20. carnal relations with a woman who is a slave The law of verses 20–22 is topically related to the Seventh Commandment because it hinges on the legalities of adultery, even though adultery is not directly involved here.

designated for another man That is, she has been pledged by her master, before her redemption, to another man.

an indemnity A payment is imposed on the responsible party because the girl, no longer a virgin, would be less desirable as a wife and the prospective husband would undoubtedly cancel the marriage.

21. A reparation offering (*asham*) is required

here in addition to the indemnity because an act of defilement has been committed: a violation of holiness. The woman had been promised to another, and even though the act was strictly speaking not adulterous, it was more than simply an act of seduction.

23. you shall regard its fruit as forbidden Literally, “You shall trim its fruit in the manner of a foreskin.” The sense here is to “trim” or “remove” certain growths.

24. set aside Hebrew: *kodesh*, which carries that meaning as well as “holy.”

jubilation Hebrew: *hillulim*, which may be an imitation of the sounds made during a time of joy.

ordained order of Creation. The parallel verse in Deut. 22:11 defines the word translated here as “mixture” (*sha-atnez*) as a garment made of linen and wool, a blending of vegetable and animal products. These three injunctions are among the classic examples of *hukkim*, rationally inexplicable rules. Hirsch offers the theory that, because wearing clothing is one of the things that separates humans from animals, the rule of *sha-atnez* teaches us to be holy in the way we dress, even as other apparently arbitrary rules teach us to be holy, to be different from animals. Animals are controlled by instinct, whereas human beings can learn to master their instincts.

20. Although this law may have represented an advance compared to the way in

which other ancient societies treated female slaves, the modern reader looks in vain for concern for the woman’s feelings or dignity. Perhaps the clause “they shall not be put to death” can be seen as a leniency. If the young woman consented to the act, she is not treated as an adulteress because her arranged marriage had not been completed.

23. The Torah has a special rule for fruit trees. Because fruits of the first three years are generally inedible, it would be wrong to offer them to God (like sacrificing a blemished animal). Only fourth-year fruits are eligible for the offering of first fruits.

plant any tree for food This is in imitation of God, who filled the newly created world with every manner of tree for food (Lev. R. 25:3).

only in the fifth year may you use its fruit—that its yield to you may be increased: I the LORD am your God.

²⁶You shall not eat anything with its blood. You shall not practice divination or soothsaying. ²⁷You shall not round off the side-growth on your head, or destroy the side-growth of your beard. ²⁸You shall not make gashes in your flesh for the dead, or incise any marks on yourselves: I am the LORD.

²⁹Do not degrade your daughter and make her a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry and the land be filled with depravity. ³⁰You shall keep My sabbaths and venerate My sanctuary: I am the LORD.

³¹Do not turn to ghosts and do not inquire

תֹּאכְלוּ אֶת-פְּרִיָו לְהוֹסִיף לָכֶם תְּבוּאָתוֹ
אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

²⁶ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם לֹא תִנְחָשׁוּ וְלֹא
תְעוּנְנֹו: ²⁷ לֹא תִקְפוּ פֶּאת רֵאשְׁכֶם וְלֹא
תִשְׁחִית אֶת פֶּאת זְקִנְךָ: ²⁸ וְשָׂרֵט לְנֹפֶשׁ
לֹא תִתְנוּ בְּבִשְׂרְכֶם וּכְתַבֶּת קַעֲקַע לֹא
תִתְנוּ בְּכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה:

²⁹ אַל-תַּחַלֵּל אֶת-בִּתְּךָ לְהַזְנוֹתָהּ וְלֹא-
תִזְנֶה הָאָרֶץ וּמְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ זִמָּה: ³⁰ אֶת-
שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּמִקְדָּשִׁי תִירָאוּ אֲנִי
יְהוָה:

³¹ אַל-תִּפְנוּ אֶל-הָאֲבֹת וְאֶל-הַיִּדְעֹנִים

26–28. These verses contain prohibitions that forbid practices characteristic of the pagan Canaanites and other idolaters.

destroy the side-growth of your beard Tearing out the hair of one's beard, as well as of the head, was a custom associated with mourning over the dead.

gashes in your flesh Pagan priests gashed themselves as they called upon their gods to answer their prayers (see 1 Kings 18:28).

incise any marks The reference is to some form of tattoo.

29. a harlot Harlotry was a violation of holiness that resulted in a status similar to that of defiled sacred objects.

land . . . land In biblical Hebrew, the word for "land" (*eretz*, here *ha-aretz*) may also connote the people on the land, which is the intent in this verse.

31. This refers to spiritualist communication

26. You shall not eat anything with its blood The verse may simply be a repetition of the prohibition in 17:10–14. Or, given the rest of this verse, it may refer to a Canaanite practice of divining the future by examining the bloody entrails of an animal (Hoffman). The Talmud derives from this verse the moral lesson that judges should fast on the day they sentence a criminal to death (BT Sanh. 63a).

divination or soothsaying These idolatrous practices are rooted in the idea that the future has already been determined and we can

compel God to reveal it to us. Judaism insists that the course of the future is not set until human beings make free decisions about their behavior, determining their fate and the fate of the people around them.

28. gashes in your flesh for the dead Judaism teaches us to express this grief by tearing our garments rather than by wounding ourselves. Again we are taught that the quest for holiness includes respect for one's body, rather than a concentration on the spiritual at the body's expense.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

19:27. round off The Sages restricted this prohibition to shaving the sideburns and beard with a straight-edged razor (BT Mak. 21a). Scissors and many electric shavers are permitted because they cut facial hair in permissible ways.

19:28. incise any marks It is prohibited to inscribe a permanent tattoo on one's body (M Mak. 3:6). Nevertheless, a Jew who is tattooed may be buried in a Jewish cemetery, like any other Jew. The CJLS permits body piercing (e.g., for earrings) as long as it does not compromise a person's health and would not lead to exposing parts of the body that usually are covered in public.

of familiar spirits, to be defiled by them: I the LORD am your God.

³²You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old; you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

³³When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. ³⁴The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the LORD am your God.

³⁵You shall not falsify measures of length, weight, or capacity. ³⁶You shall have an honest balance, honest weights, an honest *ephah*, and an honest *hin*.

I the LORD am your God who freed you from the land of Egypt. ³⁷You shall faithfully observe all My laws and all My rules: I am the LORD.

אֶל-תִּבְקְשׁוּ לְטִמְאָה בְּהֵם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

³² מִפְּנֵי שִׁיבָה תִקְוֹם וְהִדַּרְתָּ פָנֶי זָקֵן וִירָאתָ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה: פ

³³ וְכִי-יָגוּר אִתְּךָ גֵר בְּאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תוֹנֶה אֹתוֹ: ³⁴ כְּאֶזְרַח מִכֶּם יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַגֵּר | הַגֵּר אִתְּכֶם וְאַהֲבֵתָ לּוֹ כְּמוֹךָ כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

³⁵ לֹא-תַעֲשׂוּ עוֹל בַּמִּשְׁפֵּט בַּמִּדָּה בַּמִּשְׁקָל וּבַמִּשׁוֹרָה: ³⁶ מֵאֲזֵנֵי צֶדֶק אֲבִנֵי-צֶדֶק

אֵיפֶת צֶדֶק וְהִין צֶדֶק יִהְיֶה לָכֶם

אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר-הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: ³⁷ וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-כָּל-חֻקְתִּי וְאֶת-כָּל-מִשְׁפָּטֵי וְעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם

אֲנִי יְהוָה: פ חמישי

with the dead in the netherworld through oracular inquiry or augury.

33. a stranger The “stranger” (*ger*) referred to in the Bible was most often a foreign merchant, craftsman, or mercenary soldier. The term never refers to the prior inhabitants of the land, who are identified by ethnologic groupings, such as Canaanites and Amorites, or by other specific terms of reference.

35. You shall not falsify measures Literally, “You shall not commit an injustice.”

36. honest balance Ancient scales had an upright, on which two cups or plates were balanced. In one was a stone or iron weight, and the other held the goods to be weighed.

ephah See Comment to Exod. 16:36.

hin See Comment to Exod. 29:40.

I the LORD am your God who freed you from the land of Egypt In its emphasis on the liberation from Egypt this statement resembles the First Commandment.

32. show deference to the old “What we owe the old is reverence, but all they ask for is consideration, attention, not to be discarded and forgotten. What they deserve is preference, yet we do not even grant them equality” (Heschel). Act in such a manner that you do not embarrass the old person you will one day become, by your behavior today. The Midrash tells of a king who would rise to honor an elderly commoner, saying, “God has chosen to

reward him (with long life); how can I not do the same?” (Lev. R. 25:5).

34. for you were strangers in the land of Egypt Remembering our Egyptian experience, we might wish to be like the Egyptians when we have the opportunity, oppressing the powerless in our midst. Therefore, the Torah warns us to use the memory of slavery in Egypt to learn empathy for the oppressed.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

19:36. honest weights Jewish law bans fraud and deception (see Exod. 23:7; Lev. 19:13) in both business and personal interactions. Jewish communities historically appointed inspectors to ensure that the weights and measures of Jewish merchants were honest (S.A. H.M. 231:2).

20 And the LORD spoke to Moses: ²Say further to the Israelite people:

Anyone among the Israelites, or among the strangers residing in Israel, who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall be put to death; the people of the land shall pelt him with stones.

³And I will set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he gave of his offspring to Molech and so defiled My sanctuary and profaned My holy name.

⁴And if the people of the land should shut their eyes to that man when he gives of his offspring to Molech, and should not put him to death,

⁵I Myself will set My face against that man and his kin, and will cut off from among their people both him and all who follow him in going astray after Molech. ⁶And if any person turns to ghosts and familiar spirits and goes astray after them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from among his people.

⁷You shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I the LORD am your God. ⁸You shall faithfully observe My laws: I the LORD make you holy.

כ וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: ² ואל-בני ישראל תאמר איש איש מבני ישראל ומן-הגר | הגר בישראל אשר יתן מזרעו למלך מות יומת עם הארץ ירגמהו באבן: ³ ואני אתן את-פני באיש ההוא והכרתי אתו מקרב עמו כי מזרעו נתן למלך למען טמא את-מקדשי ולחלל את-שם קדשי: ⁴ ואם העלם ועלימו עם הארץ את-עיניהם מן-האיש ההוא בתתו מזרעו למלך לבלתי המית אתו: ⁵ ושמתני אני את-פני באיש ההוא ובמשפחתו והכרתי אתו ואת כל-הזנים אחריו לזנות אחרי המלך מקרב עמם: ⁶ והנפש אשר תפנה אל-האבת ואל-הידענים לזנות אחריהם ונתתי את-פני בנפש ההוא והכרתי אתו מקרב עמו: ⁷ והתקדשתם והייתם קדשים כי אני יהוה אלהיכם: ⁸ ושמרתם את-חקתי ועשיתם אתם אני יהוה מקדשכם:

חמישי

ששי
[שבועי]

THE FAMILY IN RELIGIOUS CONTEXT (20:1–27)

The laws in this chapter assume a connection between pagan worship and sexual degeneracy. Both are regarded as causes of exile.

2. among the strangers residing in Israel

The worship of gods was forbidden to all who resided in the land of Israel, whether they were Israelites or not.

3. Any object involved in pagan worship placed in or near the sanctuary rendered the sanc-

tuary impure. Furthermore, the very act of disobedience to God by members of the community effectively defiled the sanctuary, which stood within the settlement.

5. *kin* Hebrew: *mishpahah* (kin, clan), which refers to the basic sociologic unit in ancient Israelite society. The clan tended to act together in matters of worship, following the way of its leaders.

CHAPTER 20

5. Molech represents the demonic, destructive face of religion, the cult of death and human sacrifice (whereas Baal represents the orgiastic, fertility dimension of paganism). It is the polar opposite of everything the Holiness Code stands for. That may be why the Torah condemns it so vigorously.

6. The word translated as “going astray” (*liznot*) has the meaning of betraying one’s marriage vows. The Torah uses this word in connection with worshiping idols and consulting ghosts, because the covenant between God and Israel is not a business contract but a relationship of love and loyalty. Violating this covenant is seen not as default but as betrayal.

⁹If anyone insults his father or his mother, he shall be put to death; he has insulted his father and his mother—his bloodguilt is upon him.

¹⁰If a man commits adultery with a married woman, committing adultery with another man's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death. ¹¹If a man lies with his father's wife, it is the nakedness of his father that he has uncovered; the two shall be put to death—their bloodguilt is upon them. ¹²If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall be put to death; they have committed incest—their bloodguilt is upon them. ¹³If a man lies with a male as one lies with a woman, the two of them have done an abhorrent thing; they shall be put to death—their bloodguilt is upon them. ¹⁴If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is depravity; both he and they shall be put to the fire, that there be no depravity among you. ¹⁵If a man has carnal relations with a beast, he shall be put to death; and you shall kill the beast. ¹⁶If a woman approaches any beast to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the beast; they shall be put to death—their bloodguilt is upon them.

¹⁷If a man marries his sister, the daughter of

9. his bloodguilt is upon him The Hebrew word for “blood” (*dam*) and its plural (*damim*) often connote infractions punished by the death penalty.

FORBIDDEN SEXUAL UNIONS (vv. 10–21)

15. you shall kill the beast The punishment

9. insults Hebrew: *kallel*, literally “to treat lightly”—that is, to not take seriously (from *kal*, meaning “lightweight”). It is the opposite of the verb used in the Fifth Commandment, *kabbed* (from a root meaning heavy in weight, translated as “honor”). The words and values of one's parents are weighty; they must be taken seriously even when one disagrees with them.

9 כִּי־אִישׁ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִקְלַל אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ מוֹת יוֹמַת אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ קָלַל דָּמָיו בּוֹ ;
 10 וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִנְאַף אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִנְאַף אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ רַעְהוּ מוֹת־יוֹמַת הַנְּאֻף וְהַנְּאֻפָּת : 11 וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ אָבִיו עֲרוֹת אָבִיו גִּלָּה מוֹת־יוֹמַתוֹ שְׁנֵיהֶם דְּמֵיהֶם בָּם : 12 וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אֶת־כַּלְתּוֹ מוֹת יוֹמַתוֹ שְׁנֵיהֶם תָּבַל עָשׂוּ דְּמֵיהֶם בָּם : 13 וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אֶת־זָכָר מִשְׁכַּבִּי אִשָּׁה תוֹעֵבָה עָשׂוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם מוֹת יוֹמַתוֹ דְּמֵיהֶם בָּם : 14 וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִקַּח אֶת־אִשָּׁה וְאֶת־אִמָּהּ זָמָה הוּא בְּאִשׁ יִשְׁרְפוּ אֹתוֹ וְאֶתְהֵן וְלֹא־תִהְיֶה זָמָה בְּתוֹכְכֶם : 15 וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן שְׁכַבְתּוֹ בְּבִהְמָה מוֹת יוֹמַת וְאֶת־הַבְּהֵמָה תִּהְרֹגוּ : 16 וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרַב אֶל־כָּל־בְּהֵמָה לְרַבְעָה אֹתָהּ וְהִרְגַתְּ אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה וְאֶת־הַבְּהֵמָה מוֹת יוֹמַתוֹ דְּמֵיהֶם בָּם :
 17 וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִקַּח אֶת־אָחֹתוֹ בֵּת־אָבִיו

derives from the Israelite notion that animals, like humans, possess a moral sense and, therefore, also bear guilt.

17. marries Hebrew: לקח (to acquire [as a wife]); a legal term for marriage.

10ff. According to Hoffman, the laws of incest are repeated here to emphasize that they apply to all people, not only to Israelites. God demands a basic level of sexual morality from all human beings, and then summons Israel to a higher level of holiness in their sexual behavior and other aspects of life.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH
 20:13. See Comment to Lev. 18:22.

either his father or his mother, so that he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace; they shall be excommunicated in the sight of their kinsfolk. He has uncovered the nakedness of his sister, he shall bear his guilt. ¹⁸If a man lies with a woman in her infirmity and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her flow and she has exposed her blood flow; both of them shall be cut off from among their people. ¹⁹You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister, for that is laying bare one's own flesh; they shall bear their guilt. ²⁰If a man lies with his uncle's wife, it is his uncle's nakedness that he has uncovered. They shall bear their guilt: they shall die childless. ²¹If a man marries the wife of his brother, it is indecency. It is the nakedness of his brother that he has uncovered; they shall remain childless.

²²You shall faithfully observe all My laws and all My regulations, lest the land to which I bring you to settle in spew you out. ²³You shall not follow the practices of the nation that I am driving out before you. For it is because they did all these things that I abhorred them ²⁴and said to you: You shall possess their land, for I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk

או בת־אִמוֹ וּרְאָהָ אֶת־עֲרוֹתָהּ וְהִיא־
תִּרְאֶהָ אֶת־עֲרוֹתָו חֶסֶד הוּא וְנִכְרְתוּ
לְעֵינַי בְּנֵי עַמִּים עֲרוֹת אַחֲתוֹ גִּלָּה עֲוֹנוֹ
יִשָּׂא: ¹⁸ וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁכַּב אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ דְּוָה
וְגִלָּה אֶת־עֲרוֹתָהּ אֶת־מִקְרָהּ הֶעֱרָה וְהוּא
גִּלְתָּהּ אֶת־מִקְוֹר דַּמְיָהּ וְנִכְרְתוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם
מִקְרֵב עַמִּים: ¹⁹ וְעֲרוֹת אַחֹת אִמָּךְ וְאַחֹת
אָבִיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה כִּי אֶת־שֹׁאֲרוֹ הֶעֱרָה
עֲוֹנָם יִשָּׂאוּ: ²⁰ וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אֶת־
דְּדֹתוֹ עֲרוֹת דְּדוֹ גִּלָּה חֲטָאִם יִשָּׂאוּ
עֲרִירִים יִמְתּוּ: ²¹ וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִקַּח אֶת־
אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲחִיו נִדְּהָ הוּא עֲרוֹת אֲחִיו גִּלָּה
עֲרִירִים יִהְיוּ:

²² וּשְׁמֵרְתֶם אֶת־כָּל־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־כָּל־
מִשְׁפָּטַי וְעִשִּׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא־תִקִּיאוּ אֶתְכֶם
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵבִיא אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה
לְשִׁבְתָּ בָּהּ: ²³ וְלֹא תִלְכוּ בַחֻקֹּת הַגּוֹי
אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי מְשַׁלַּח מִפְּנֵיכֶם כִּי אֶת־כָּל־
אֱלֹהִים עֲשׂוּ וְאֶקַּץ בָּם: ²⁴ וְאָמַר לְכֶם אֲתָם
תִּירְשׁוּ אֶת־אֲדָמְתָם וְאֲנִי אֶתְנַנֶּה לְכֶם
לְרִשְׁתָּ אֹתָהּ אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ אֲנִי

disgrace Hebrew: *hesed*, like the Aramaic word *hasda* (ignominy, disgrace). It should not be confused with its Hebrew homonym, which means “love, kindness.”

they shall be excommunicated in the sight of their kinsfolk This is a way of expressing banishment.

18. in her infirmity While menstruating.

POSSESSION OF THE LAND (vv. 22–27)

22. You shall faithfully observe all My laws

This statement introduces the closing admonition of this section.

24. flowing with milk and honey A well-known characterization of the land in biblical literature. It is depicted as abounding in milk-producing herds, flocks, and fruit trees, especially the date palm. The Hebrew word for “honey” (*d’vash*) usually refers to the nectar of trees. The word translated as “flowing” also means “oozing,” which links this section with the verses concerned about bodily discharge.

24–25. You shall possess their land, for I will give it to you The literal meaning of “for” here is “and.” One commentator took these words to mean, first you must claim the

land, and only then will I, God, confirm it as yours. God’s gifts are given permanently only to those who make the effort to claim them.

and honey. I the LORD am your God who has set you apart from other peoples. ²⁵So you shall set apart the pure beast from the impure, the impure bird from the pure. You shall not draw abomination upon yourselves through beast or bird or anything with which the ground is alive, which I have set apart for you to treat as impure. ²⁶You shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and I have set you apart from other peoples to be Mine.

²⁷A man or a woman who has a ghost or a familiar spirit shall be put to death; they shall be pelted with stones—their bloodguilt shall be upon them.

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־הִבְדִּילְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הָעַמִּים: ²⁵וְהִבְדִּילְתֶּם בֵּין־הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה לְטֹמְאָה וּבֵין־הָעוֹף הַטָּמֵא לְטָהוֹר וְלֹא־תִשְׁקְצוּ אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם בַּבְּהֵמָה וּבְעוֹף וּבְכֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמַשׁ הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־הִבְדִּילְתִּי לָכֶם לְטֹמְאָ: ²⁶וְהִייתֶם לִי קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֲבַדְלֵ אֶתְכֶם מִן־הָעַמִּים לְהִיּוֹת לִי: ²⁷וְאִישׁ אִו־אִשָּׁה כִּי־יִהְיֶה בֵּהֶם אוֹב אוֹ יִדְעוּנֵי מוֹת יוֹמְתוֹ בְּאֶבֶן יִרְגְּמוּ אֹתָם דְּמֵיהֶם בָּם: פ

who has set you apart from other peoples. So you shall set apart the pure beast from the impure The people Israel, by bringing the dimension of holiness not only into its ritual life but also into its ways of eating, dress, and sexual mores, will be a model for all humanity of

how people can refine and transcend their animal nature and achieve holiness.

26. You shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy The *parashah* concludes (in this penultimate verse) as it began.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

20:26. be holy . . . I have set you apart . . . to be Mine. Beyond the specifics of Jewish law, we are obligated to act in a way that reflects well on God, the Jewish people, and our traditions (*kiddush ha-Shem*) and to refrain from acting in a way that would bring dishonor to God, our people, and its traditions (*hillul ha-Shem*) (MT Foundations of the Torah 5:1,10–11).

הַפְּטָרָה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת / קְדוּשִׁים

HAFTARAH 1 FOR AḤAREI MOT / K'DOSHIM

AMOS 9:7–15 (*Ashk'nazim*)

(Instructions for Ashk'nazim: When Aḥarei Mot and K'doshim are read separately and no occasions coincide that have a special haftarah of their own [see below], some traditions recite this haftarah with Aḥarei Mot and the following haftarah with K'doshim; others reverse the order of these haftarot.

When Aḥarei Mot and K'doshim are combined, recite this haftarah.

When Aḥarei Mot is read separately on Shabbat ha-Gadol or on Erev Rosh Ḥodesh, recite this haftarah with K'doshim. When K'doshim will be read separately on Rosh Ḥodesh, recite this haftarah with Aḥarei Mot.)

The prophet Amos is among the earliest of the classical prophets, flourishing in the reigns of King Jeroboam II of Israel (784–748 B.C.E.) and King Uzziah of Judah (769–733 B.C.E.). Speaking against Judah (in the south), but especially against the northern kingdom of Israel, Amos severely criticizes the people for cultic sins and moral insensitivity. His words are all doom and dire prediction, except for his final words, which constitute the last two verses of this *haftarah*. After opening with a judgment speech against sinful nations, his own people included, Amos promises hope and restoration to Israel and Judah in days to come.

Amos's final words of hope constitute a striking reversal of his opening speech to the northern kingdom of Israel, when, years earlier, he spoke God's word "Concerning the whole family that I [God] brought up from the land of Egypt: / You alone have I singled out / Of all the families of the earth— / That is why I call you to account / For all your iniquities" (3:1–2). Even this uniqueness seems to be neutralized in the *haftarah*, as the people are told that God will judge them because they are no different from the other nations (like the Philistines and the Arameans)

whom the Lord delivered from other lands (9:7–8). Thus doom will befall Israel, although not because God holds it to special account or because of unique favor shown it in the past.

These new remarks were certainly designed to unsettle the listener and to undermine any false sense of trust or advantage. Indeed, for Amos, historical redemption is not the basis for the divine election of Israel, or for its survival. God's will and grace are the independent factors determining Israelite destiny. Israel always remains accountable to the Covenant. Only obedience or the humble acceptance of divine judgment is in the hands of the people; all else depends on God.

The special favor that God accords Israel is marked by the decision to save a remnant of the northern nation and to scatter them in foreign exile. This mitigated judgment is presented as an expression of divine favor, although unmerited; for the sins of the people should have led to their doom, as was the case for the other nations. To announce God's act, the prophet uses the image of a sieve that scatters some particles while catching others in the grating. The strewn elements are apparently the people who are saved, in contradistinction to the sinners who remain in the instrument and do not escape its mesh (vv. 8–9). In terms of the prophet's rhetoric, the survivors are simply those who do not boastfully deny divine judgment, not individuals who deserve acquittal for any other reason (cf. v. 10). For later readers, Amos's pronouncement seems to forecast the dispersion of the northern tribes, an event that still lay in the future (722–721 B.C.E.). However, the imminent aggression of the Assyrian Empire and its expansion are never explicitly mentioned by the prophet.

More perplexing is the ensuing forecast that God "will set up again the fallen booth of David" (v. 11). The obscurity of this image and the en-

suings references to widespread ruins have long perplexed readers of Amos, not least because the destruction of the Temple and of Judea lay nearly two centuries ahead (587–586 B.C.E.). At any rate, readers of these words are given hope to anticipate a restoration of the Davidic era, when expansion was at a height and national unity a reality. The dooms forecast against Judea will be wholly assuaged by an anticipation of a renewal of the “days of old” (see 2:4–5, 9:11). In those times, Judea dominated Edom. So it will again.

The restoration of Israel is the fitting complement to these hopes. Here, too, ancient messages of doom against the north will be reversed through a miraculous regeneration of life (9:13–15). The cycle of nature will be so bountiful as to overlap itself repeatedly; scarcely will the older harvests be gathered when the times for new planting will fall due. Even the people will partake of this revival. In a dramatic image, Amos speaks of the planters planted in the earth, nevermore to be uprooted from their homeland. As a sign of this new era, Israel will again be called “My people” (v. 14).

RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH
TO THE PARASHAH

Both *Aḥarei Mot* and this *haftarah* emphasize that God will judge all peoples for their iniquities. Furthermore, divine acts of national liberation are no guarantee against punishment for sin.

Meanwhile, these words of Amos contrast dramatically with *K'doshim*. For its part, *K'doshim*

concludes boldly with a challenging proclamation: “You shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and I have set you apart from other peoples to be Mine (*li-hyot li*)” (Lev. 20:26). Action is a responsibility for both parties to the Covenant. Two distinct acts are portrayed. God has made a unilateral choice of Israel to be His special people. Israel is called on to react by faithfully observing the covenantal laws and regulations to realize the divine call to be holy.

This *haftarah* stands in tension with such a teaching. The prophet’s divine assertion that “To Me (*li*), O Israelites, you are just like the Ethiopians” (Amos 9:7) denies Israel’s uniqueness and asserts a fixed reality. No divine election is proclaimed here and no special destiny is awaiting fulfillment. Israel is a nation among the nations, and its history is similar to that of its neighbors. This does not erase national memory, however, or the path of piety that is uniquely Israel’s. It only means that Israel may not rely on divine grace shown it in the past as a guarantee of mercy in the present or in the future. Thus Israel must reflect deeply on its destiny and discover just how its unique covenantal path shapes its national-religious character. Then will it transform the triumphal assertion of uniqueness found in *K'doshim* into a new awareness of distinction and duty.

Kept separate, *K'doshim* and this *haftarah*’s lessons cancel each other’s truth concerning election; brought together, they revise one another reciprocally and suggest a more inward and humble theology of chosenness.

9 ⁷To Me, O Israelites, you are

Just like the Ethiopians

—declares the LORD.

True, I brought Israel up

From the land of Egypt,

But also the Philistines from Caphtor

And the Arameans from Kir.

ט
 הָלוֹא כְּשֵׁיִם ⁷
 אַתֶּם לִי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 נְאֻם־יְהוָה
 הָלוֹא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל הֶעֱלִיתִי
 מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
 וּפְלִשְׁתִּים מִכַּפְתּוֹר
 וְאַרְמֵי מִקִּיר :

Amos 9:7. To Me, O Israelites In Hebrew grammar, this assertion is a question: “Are you not just like the Ethiopians to Me, O Israelites?”

Caphtor Most likely identified with Crete (see Jer. 47:4).

Kir In Amos 1:5, the people will be exiled

⁸Behold, the Lord GOD has His eye
Upon the sinful kingdom:
I will wipe it off
The face of the earth!

הִנֵּה עֵינַי | אֲדַנֵּי יְהוָה
בַּמַּמְלָכָה הַחַטָּאָה
וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּי אֹתָהּ
מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה

But, I will not wholly wipe out
The House of Jacob
—declares the LORD.

אָפֶס כִּי לֹא הִשְׁמִיד אֶשְׁמִיד
אֶת־בֵּית יַעֲקֹב
נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

⁹For I will give the order
And shake the House of Israel—
Through all the nations—
As one shakes [sand] in a sieve,
And not a pebble falls to the ground.

כִּי־הִנֵּה אֲנַכִּי מְצִיָּה
וְהִנְעוֹתַי בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם
אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
כַּאֲשֶׁר יִנּוּעַ בַּכְּבֵּרָה
וְלֹא־יִפּוֹל צְרוּר אֶרֶץ:

¹⁰All the sinners of My people
Shall perish by the sword,
Who boast,
“Never shall the evil
Overtake us or come near us.”

בַּחֶרֶב יָמוּתוּ
כָּל חַטָּאֵי עַמִּי
הַאֲמֹרִים
לֹא־תִגִּישׁ וְתִקְדֶּיִם
בְּעַדֵּינוּ הָרָעָה:

¹¹In that day,
I will set up again the fallen booth of David:
I will mend its breaches and set up its ruins
anew.

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
אָקִים אֶת־סֶכֶת דָּוִד הַנִּפְלֹת
וְגִדְרֹתַי אֶת־פְּרִצֵיהֶן וְהִרְסוֹתֵיהֶן אָקִים
וּבְנִיתִיהָ כִּימֵי עוֹלָם:

I will build it firm as in the days of old,
¹²So that they shall possess the rest of Edom
And all the nations once attached to My
name

לְמַעַן יִירְשׁוּ אֶת־שְׂאֲרֵית אֲדוֹם
וְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרְאוּ שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם
נְאֻם־יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה זֹאת: פ

—declares the LORD who
will bring this to pass.

הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים
נְאֻם־יְהוָה

¹³A time is coming
—declares the LORD—

back to Kir. Cf. 2 Kings 16:9, which reports that the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III took Damascus “captive to Kir” (ca. 734 B.C.E.).

8. the Lord GOD has His eye Literally, “the eyes of the Lord GOD.” Use of this idiom dramatizes the investigative character of divine justice (cf. Zech. 4:10). The image apparently derives from the older Near Eastern identification of royal investigators with the eyes of the king.

9. sieve Hebrew: *k'varah*. Apparently a coarse

sieve, used to strain straw and stones.

10. Never shall the evil . . . A quotation exemplifying the boastful disdain of the people.

11. booth This image is unclear. Some commentators have interpreted the metaphor in terms of the fallen state of the Davidic (United) Monarchy (Rashi, Radak).

12. once attached to My name Hebrew: *asher nikra sh'mi aleihem*; literally, “upon whom My name is called.” This idiom signifies ownership.

When the plowman shall meet the reaper,
 And the treader of grapes
 Him who holds the [bag of] seed;
 When the mountains shall drip wine
 And all the hills shall wave [with grain].
 14I will restore My people Israel.
 They shall rebuild ruined cities and inhabit
 them;
 They shall plant vineyards and drink their
 wine;
 They shall till gardens and eat their fruits.
 15And I will plant them upon their soil,
 Nevermore to be uprooted
 From the soil I have given them
 —said the LORD your God.

וְנָגַשׁ חוֹרֵשׁ בְּקֹצֵר
 וְדָרַךְ עֲנָבִים
 בְּמִשְׁךְ הַזֶּרַע
 וְהִטִּיפוּ הַהָרִים עֵסִיס
 וְכָל-הַגְּבָעוֹת תִּתְמוּגְגְנָה׃
 14 וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת-שְׁבוֹת עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל׃
 וּבְנוּ עָרִים נְשֻׁמוֹת וַיִּשְׁבוּ
 וַנְטִיעוּ כְרָמִים וְשָׁתוּ אֶת-יַיִנָּם
 וַעֲשׂוּ גִזְוֹת וְאָכְלוּ אֶת-פְּרִיָהֶם׃
 15 וַנְטִיעֵתִים עַל-אֲדָמָתָם
 וְלֹא יִנְתָּשׂוּ עוֹד
 מֵעַל אֲדָמָתָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָהֶם
 אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ׃

13. the plowman shall meet the reaper This image, and the subsequent image of the “treader of grapes” meeting the sower, both dramatize the physical bounty anticipated. The produce will be

so munificent as to extend into the ensuing planting season (Rashi, Radak).

15. I will plant them Like a firmly rooted tree, not to be moved. Compare Exod. 15:17.

הפטרות אחרי מות / קדשים

HAFTARAH 2 FOR AḤAREI MOT / K'DOSHIM

EZEKIEL 22:1–19 (*Ashk'nazim*)

EZEKIEL 22:1–16 (*S'fardim*)

(For instructions for *Ashk'nazim*, see the introduction to the previous haftarah. *S'fardim* recite this haftarah with *Aḥarei Mot*, and the next haftarah with *K'doshim*.)

In this *haftarah* the prophet Ezekiel addresses the city Jerusalem as “the city of bloodshed,” accusing Jerusalem for “all her abhorrent deeds” (v. 2). These sins, listed in clusters, focus on moral and sexual crimes in family and society, with special emphasis on the oppression of socially dependent and powerless individuals. The prophet also charges the city with desecrating *Shabbat* and the sacral offices. For Ezekiel, the city symbolizes the outrages committed by all the people, judging them as a whole. This passage is dated sometime after Ezekiel’s deportation to Babylon in 597 B.C.E. and before 587–586, when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the general population was exiled to Babylon.

In his role as God’s prosecutor, Ezekiel accuses the people of crimes specified in the Torah, showing familiarity with a wide range of rules from the Covenant Code (Exod. 21–23), and especially from the Holiness Code (Lev. 18–20), as well as various laws from Deuteronomy. Thus the prophet’s speech testifies to formulations of the laws of the Torah from the early 6th century B.C.E. This was long before Ezra’s return from the exile and the beginning of the canonization of the Torah in the 5th century B.C.E.

The detailed list of sins reinforces the prophet’s assertion that the people were utterly deserving of divine punishment. This accounts for Ezekiel’s specification of moral misdemeanors from the legal collections cited above. Alongside these faults the prophet specifies violations drawn from earlier priestly traditions, including contempt for *Shabbat* and the holy offerings, and improper sexual relations.

Undoubtedly there was a basis for these accusations. But their comprehensive and schematic character should be taken into account in any assessment of the religious and moral state of the nation at the time. Ezekiel does not limit his critique to issues of ritual impurity, but absolutely condemns immoral and inconsiderate uses of power as well.

For such actions, the people are condemned to exile, where in due course their suffering and “dishonor” will “consume the impurity” from them (15–16). The polluting effect of idolatry and sexual misconduct is found elsewhere in Ezekiel (see 5:11, 20:7,18,31). The prophet’s inclusion of moral and civil behavior in his judgment of impurity is also found in priestly sources (Num. 35:33–34). Nevertheless, Ezekiel’s comprehensive emphasis is noteworthy, as is his view of the punishment of exile as purification through suffering. On this note of judgment (22:16) the *haftarah* concludes according to Sephardic tradition.

Ashk'nazim traditionally add three more verses to conclude the *haftarah* with a message of hope (22:17–19). Ezekiel here extends the imagery of purification found in verse 15, offering the good news of restoration to the homeland. This message of the *haftarah* represents a remarkable and radical transformation of scripture by the Sages, for 22:17–22 constitutes an outright oracle of doom, in which God condemns Israel as “dross” and announces that He will gather them together in Jerusalem and melt them in the fire of His fury. The Sages, determining which verses would constitute the *haftarah*, decided to stop the prophecy of doom at verse 19. Their truncated passage gives the impression that God will transform the sinful dross of His people in exile, to restore them to Jerusalem in their new and purified state. It is this positive word that prevailed when rabbinic tradition radically transformed the teaching of God’s

wrath. The prophecy of hope that concludes the *haftarah* is thus a revelation of Jewish hope and its triumph over despair—even against the divine dooms of scripture.

RELATION OF THE *HAFTARAH*
TO THE *PARASHAH*

This *haftarah* stresses cultic and moral sins, many of which are directly connected to laws found in both *parashiyot*. There is a clear link to the sexual prohibitions of Lev. 18 (*Aḥarei Mot*) and Lev. 20 (*K'doshim*). The prophet's diatribe also echoes passages found in Lev. 19 (*K'doshim*), including detailed similarities such as the profanation of *Shabbat* (Lev. 19:3; Ezek. 22:8), the economic oppression of compatriots (Lev. 19:13; Ezek. 22:12), and base activities leading to bloodshed (Lev. 19:16; Ezek. 22:9).

The instruction in *Aḥarei Mot*, stressing the point that observing the laws of the Covenant is something one lives in and through (Lev. 18:5), raises living by the laws of the Torah into a spiritual principle. This *haftarah*, in contrast, teaches that immorality vitiates and perverts the life and spirit of the perpetrator and of the victim, by emphasizing the point that maltreatment of the poor and needy is an act of bloodshed.

By presenting sin as an act of defilement, both this *haftarah* and the two *parashiyot* present the Covenant as a means of purity or sanctification, for the earth and for its inhabitants. In this way, all actions prescribed by the Covenant constitute a kind of priestly service, transforming the mere natural into acts of holiness and the mere human into spiritual life.

22 The word of the LORD came to me: ²Further, O mortal, arraign, arraign the city of bloodshed; declare to her all her abhorrent deeds! ³Say: Thus said the Lord GOD: O city in whose midst blood is shed, so that your hour is approaching; within which fetishes are made, so that you have become impure! ⁴You stand guilty of the blood you have shed, defiled by the fetishes you have made. You have brought on your day; you have reached your year. Therefore I will make you the mockery of the nations and the scorn of all the lands. ⁵Both the near and the far shall scorn you, O besmirched of name, O laden with iniquity!

⁶Every one of the princes of Israel in your

Ezekiel 22:2. arraign, arraign In Hebrew, this is literally a question: "Will you arraign?" A verb repeated at the outset of a prophetic speech (see also Ezek. 20:4) gives it emphatic force, yielding the meaning here: "Surely you will arraign!"

3. fetishes Hebrew: *gillulim*, meaning "idols." Abravanel suggests that this is a metaphor for "all the other sins" besides bloodshed that the people have committed.

become impure Ezekiel's priestly orientation

כב ויהי דבר־יהוה אלי לאמר: ²ואתה בן־אדם התשפט התשפט את־עיר הדמים והודעתה את כל־תועבותיה: ³ואמרת בזה אמר אדני יהוה עיר שפכת דם בתוכה לבוא עתה ועשתה גלולים עליה לטמאה: ⁴בדמך אשר־שפכת אשמת ובגלולך אשר־עשית טמאת ותקריבי ימין ותבוא עד־שנותיך על־פן נתתיך חרפה לגוים וקלטה לכל־הארצות: ⁵הקרבות והרחקות ממך יתקלסו־בך טמאת השם רבת המהומה: ⁶הנה נשיאי ישראל איש לזרעו היו בך

transforms Israel's civil–legal crimes into ritual, polluting ones (cf. vv. 3–5,10,15). In this he was particularly indebted to older priestly traditions that treated illicit sexual relations with relatives as impurity (see Lev. 18:7–20,24–25). Ezekiel includes bloodshed and economic oppression in his list.

5. O besmirched of name Alternatively, this phrase is the derogatory epithet spoken against them by the surrounding gentiles (Rashi).

midst used his strength for the shedding of blood. ⁷Fathers and mothers have been humiliated within you; strangers have been cheated in your midst; orphans and widows have been wronged within you. ⁸You have despised My holy things and profaned My sabbaths.

⁹Base men in your midst were intent on shedding blood; in you they have eaten upon the mountains; and they have practiced depravity in your midst. ¹⁰In you they have uncovered their fathers' nakedness; in you they have ravished women during their menstrual impurity. ¹¹They have committed abhorrent acts with other men's wives; in their depravity they have defiled their own daughters-in-law; in you they have ravished their own sisters, daughters of their fathers. ¹²They have taken bribes within you to shed blood. You have taken advance and accrued interest; you have defrauded your countrymen to your profit. You have forgotten Me—declares the Lord God.

¹³Lo, I will strike My hands over the ill-gotten gains that you have amassed, and over the bloodshed that has been committed in your midst. ¹⁴Will your courage endure, will your hands remain firm in the days when I deal with you? I the LORD have spoken and I will act. ¹⁵I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the lands; I will consume the impurity out of you. ¹⁶You shall be dishonored in the sight of nations, and you shall know that I am the LORD.

¹⁷The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁸O mortal, the House of Israel has become dross to Me; they are all copper, tin, iron, and lead. But in

לְמַעַן שְׁפָרְדֶם: ⁷אָב וָאִם הִקְלוּ בְךָ לְגַר עָשׂוּ בַעֲשָׁק בְּתוֹכְךָ יְתוּם וְאַלְמָנָה הוֹנוּ בְּךָ: ⁸קִדְשֵׁי בְּזִית וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי חָלַלְתָּ:

⁹אֲנָשֵׁי רִכִּיל הָיוּ בְּךָ לְמַעַן שְׁפָרְדֶם וְאֶל־הַהָרִים אָכְלוּ בְךָ זִמָּה עָשׂוּ בְּתוֹכְךָ: ¹⁰עָרוֹת־אָב גְּלַהֲבָךָ טִמְאַת הַנְּהַדָּה עֲנוּ־בְךָ: ¹¹וְאִישׁ | אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ רָעָהוּ עָשָׂה תוֹעֵבָה וְאִישׁ אֶת־כַּלְתּוֹ טִמָּא בְּזִמָּה וְאִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיתוֹ בְּת־אָבִיו עֲנָה־בְּךָ: ¹²שָׁחַד לְקַחוּ־בְךָ לְמַעַן שְׁפָרְדֶם נִשְׁף וְתַרְבִּית לְקַחַת וְתִבְצָעֵי רַעִיף בַּעֲשָׁק וְאֹתִי שָׁכַחְתָּ נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה:

¹³וְהִנֵּה הִכִּיתִי כַפִּי אֶל־בְּצַעֲךָ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ וְעַל־דַּמְךָ אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ בְּתוֹכְךָ: ¹⁴הִיעָמֵד לְבָבְךָ אִם־תִּחְזַקְנָה יָדֶיךָ לַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה אוֹתְךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה דְּבַרְתִּי וְעָשִׂיתִי: ¹⁵וְהִפִּיצוֹתִי אוֹתְךָ בְּגוֹלִים וְזִרְיתֶיךָ בְּאֲרָצוֹת וְהִתְמַלְתִּי טִמְאַתְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ: ¹⁶וְנַחַלְתָּ בְךָ לְעֵינַי גּוֹיִם וַיִּדְעַתְּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה: פ

¹⁷וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: ¹⁸בֶּן־אָדָם הִיוּ־לִי בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְסוּג לְסִיג כְּלָם נִחַשְׁתָּ וּבְדִיל וּבְרָזָל וְעוֹפְרַת בְּתוֹךְ כּוֹר

10–11. The prophet details various sexual offenses (incest, adultery, and cohabitation with a menstruating woman). In terms of both its technical vocabulary and its use of the third person, this legal cluster follows Lev. 20:10–18.

14. I the LORD have spoken and I will act Promise and fulfillment are linked. Alternatively,

“I am *YHVH*; what I have spoken I will do!” (Greenberg).

16. you shall be dishonored Hebrew: *v'nihalt bakh*; a term linked to ritual desecration (see v. 8, and Lev. 18:21, 19:8).

18. dross Hebrew: *sig*, meaning unclear. Possibly it refers to an alloy of lead and silver. In this

a crucible, the dross shall turn into silver. ¹⁹Assuredly, thus said the Lord GOD: Because you have all become dross, I will gather you into Jerusalem.

סגים כֶּסֶף הָיוּ: ס 19 לָכֵן בָּה אָמַר אֲדַנִּי
יְהוָה יַעַן הָיוּ בְלָכֶם לְסָגִים לָכֵן הִנְנִי
קֹבֵץ אֶתְכֶם אֶל־תּוֹךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם:

figurative expression, the people who are “dross” will be refined in fire as a punishment. (In reality, dross is the scum that forms on the surface of mol-

ten metal during the process of liquefying.) For Ezekiel, the melting fire is both a proving of the people’s guilt and their punishment.

הַפְּטָרָה קְדוּשִׁים

HAFTARAH FOR K'DOSHIM

EZEKIEL 20:2–20 (*S'fardim*)

The verses of this *haftarah* (from 591 B.C.E.) are part of a long sermonic retrospective on Israel's sinful past and present that concludes with prophecies of restoration.

God commands Ezekiel to call the people to account: "Arraign, arraign them" (v. 4). In Hebrew, this command is in the form of a double question—"Will you arraign them, will you arraign?"—which has the effect of an urgent direct request to "arraign" them. In calling them to account, the prophet is commanded to declare to them (literally, "make known" to them) the details of their sins as a people in the past (v. 4). To counterpoint this derogatory information, the prophet uses the same verb to indicate God's past favor in having made Himself "known" to the Israelites and to the Egyptians (vv. 5,9). As a further expression of beneficence, God also "made known" His law to the nation (v. 11) and even gave them the holy *Shabbat* so that they might "know" Him (vv. 12,20). By such linguistic emphasis Ezekiel drives home the point that Israel has been a historical ingrate and that the stress on their sins is appropriate because of their ongoing apostasy.

The prophet shows himself to be well versed in Torah traditions. For example, Ezekiel recalls the Israelite rebellion in the wilderness and God's subsequent decision not to "make an end of them" (*l'khalloam*, v. 13) so that His name would "not be profaned" (*behel*) among the nations (v. 14). This, too, recalls a passage in the Torah: The sin of the Golden Calf and God's initial statement that "I may destroy them" (*va-akhallam*) in the wilderness, although He subsequently relented owing to Moses' entreaty (*va-y'hal*) for forgiveness (Exod. 32:10–12). Significantly, Ezekiel does not refer to Moses' intervention here or to Moses' response to God's decision to destroy the people after their lack of faith in His ability to bring them to the Land. In his sermon, Ezekiel repeatedly and solely portrays mercy as a unilateral divine act.

Yet the people deserve punishment for their continuous sin and rebellion in the past, as pointed out in vv. 7–8 and 11–13. Ezekiel, in his closing exhortation, refers to a second divine appeal to the nation in the wilderness—urging a new generation to reject the ways of their ancestors and to observe God's laws and sanctify *Shabbat* (vv. 18–20). Here, again, the choice is between the defilement of idolatry and rebelliousness versus the sanctifying power of divine instruction.

This conclusion produces a new teaching. In its original setting, Ezek. 20:18–20 is but another exhortation, urging the people to obey the laws before presenting another account of their rebellion and sin. The ancient Sages decided not to include in this *haftarah* the people's negative response found in subsequent verses. With this decision they transformed Ezekiel's historical arraignment into a divine instruction for all generations, not limited to the people of biblical times. Thus Ezekiel's prophetic word is transformed from an old lawsuit into an ever-new summons to heed and obey the Covenant.

RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE PARASHAH

Like Moses, Ezekiel emphasizes the centrality of God's law and the divine sanctification of the people by and through it. At the outset of the *parashah*, Moses speaks for God in calling on the people to "be holy" and to "keep My sabbaths" (Lev. 19:2–3). Thereupon a pattern of behavior is specified as leading to holiness in God's sight. This theme recurs at the end of the *parashah*, when God instructs the people: "You shall faithfully observe My laws; I the LORD make you holy" (Lev. 20:8). Ezekiel, correspondingly, repeats God's instruction that the people "Follow My laws and be careful to observe My rules" (Ezek. 20:19, cf. v. 11). They are further told that "I gave them My

sabbaths to serve as a sign . . . that it is I the LORD who sanctify [the people]" (v. 12).

The *parashah* and the *haftarah* share another phrase that also underscores the blessed nature of the divine instruction and Ezekiel's knowledge of Torah traditions. This is the emphasis that God gave the people "My laws" and "My rules . . . by the pursuit of which a man shall live" (Lev. 18:5; Ezek. 20:11,13,21).

The phrase that associates life with following God's laws stresses that one will attain the blessings of earthly life by means of the laws. Generations of postbiblical readers, however, have understood the true reward of following God's laws to be in the spiritual life such piety engenders, be that in and through a life of sanctity in this world, or in a blissful afterlife (see Targ. and Ibn Ezra on Lev. 18:5, and MT Sacrilege 8:8).

20 ²The word of the LORD came to me:

³O mortal, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them: Thus said the Lord GOD: Have you come to inquire of Me? As I live, I will not respond to your inquiry—declares the Lord GOD.

⁴Arraign, arraign them, O mortal! Declare to them the abhorrent deeds of their fathers. ⁵Say to them: Thus said the Lord GOD:

On the day that I chose Israel, I gave My oath to the stock of the House of Jacob; when I made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I gave my oath to them. When I said, "I the LORD am your God," ⁶that same day I swore to them to take them out of the land of Egypt into a land flowing with milk and honey, a land which I had sought out for them, the fairest of all lands.

⁷I also said to them: Cast away, every one of you, the detestable things that you are drawn to, and do not defile yourselves with the fetishes of Egypt—I the LORD am your God. ⁸But they defied Me and refused to listen to Me. They did not cast away the detestable things they were drawn to, nor did they give up the fetishes of Egypt. Then I resolved to pour out My fury

כ ²וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

³בֶּן־אָדָם דַּבֵּר אֶת־זַקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הַלְדַּרְשׁ אֹתִי אַתֶּם בָּאִים חַי־אֲנִי אִם־אֲדַרְשׁ לָכֶם נָא אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה:

⁴הַתְּשַׁפֵּט אַתֶּם הַתְּשַׁפֹּט בֶּן־אָדָם אֶת־תּוֹעֵבֹת אֲבוֹתֵם הַדּוֹעֵים: ⁵וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

בַּיּוֹם בַּחֲרִי בְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָשָׂא יָדִי לְזַרְעַ בֵּית יַעֲקֹב וְאוֹדַע לָהֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאָשָׂא יָדִי לָהֶם לֵאמֹר אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ⁶בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נִשְׁאֲתִי יָדִי לָהֶם לְהוֹצִיאֵם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֶל־אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־תִּרְתִּי לָהֶם זִבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ צְבִי הִיא לְכָל־הָאֲרָצוֹת:

⁷וְאָמַר אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ שְׂקוּצֵי עֵינָיו הַשְּׁלִיכוּ וּבְגִלּוּלֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶל־תִּשְׁמָאוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ⁸וַיִּמְרוּ־בִי וְלֹא אָבוּ לִשְׁמַע אֵלַי אִישׁ אֶת־שְׂקוּצֵי עֵינֵיהֶם לֹא הַשְּׁלִיכוּ וְאֶת־גִּלּוּלֵי מִצְרַיִם לֹא עָזְבוּ וְאָמַר לִשְׁפָף:

Ezekiel 20:2–3. Ezekiel was approached by a delegation of elders who wanted an oracular consultation with God. The prophet thus acts as a medium ("and the word of the LORD came to me") who provides the divine response (vv. 3,31, cf. 14:3,7). This use of the verb "inquire" (*darash*) has roots in oracular functions (cf. Gen. 25:22), often performed by Israelite and foreign prophets (1 Sam. 9:9; 1 Kings 22:5–8; 2 Kings 1:3,6). It

is also found in connection with Jeremiah, Ezekiel's contemporary (Jer. 21:2).

5–7. The references to divine self-revelation in Egypt and the divine oath to bring the people to the Promised Land are drawn directly from Exod. 6:2–8. In Ezekiel's discourse, however, the revelation is to all the people (not just to Moses), and the divine oath to redeem the people is given to the nation in Egypt (not only to the patriarchs).

upon them, to vent all My anger upon them there, in the land of Egypt. ⁹But I acted for the sake of My name, that it might not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they were. For it was before their eyes that I had made Myself known to Israel to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

¹⁰I brought them out of the land of Egypt and I led them into the wilderness. ¹¹I gave them My laws and taught them My rules, by the pursuit of which a man shall live. ¹²Moreover, I gave them My sabbaths to serve as a sign between Me and them, that they might know that it is I the LORD who sanctify them. ¹³But the House of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not follow My laws and they rejected My rules—by the pursuit of which a man shall live—and they grossly desecrated My sabbaths. Then I thought to pour out My fury upon them in the wilderness and to make an end of them; ¹⁴but I acted for the sake of My name, that it might not be profaned in the sight of the nations before whose eyes I had led them out. ¹⁵However, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the fairest of all lands, which I had assigned [to them], ¹⁶for they had rejected My rules, disobeyed My laws, and desecrated My sabbaths; their hearts followed after their fetishes. ¹⁷But I had pity on them and did not destroy them; I did not make an end of them in the wilderness.

¹⁸I warned their children in the wilderness: Do not follow the practices of your fathers, do

חַמְתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם לְכַלּוֹת אֶפְלֵ בְהֶם בְּתוֹךְ אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: ⁹וְאָעַשׂ לְמַעַן שְׁמִי לְבַלְתִּי הַחַל לְעֵינַי הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־הֵמָּה בְּתוֹכֶם אֲשֶׁר נִודַעְתִּי אֲלֵיהֶם לְעֵינֵיהֶם לְהוֹצִיאֵם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

¹⁰וְאוֹצִיאֵם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאָבֵאֵם אֶל־הַמִּדְבָּר: ¹¹וְאֶתֵּן לָהֶם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי הַיְדוּעָתַי אוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָם הָאָדָם וְחֵי בָהֶם: ¹²וְגַם אֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי נָתַתִּי לָהֶם לְהִיּוֹת לְאוֹת בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיהֶם לְדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקַדְּשָׁם: ¹³וַיִּמְרוּ־בִי בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר בְּחֻקֹּתַי לֹא־הִלְכוּ וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי מָאֲסוּ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָם הָאָדָם וְחֵי בָהֶם וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי חָלְלוּ מְאֹד וְאָמַר לְשַׁפְּךָ חַמְתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם בַּמִּדְבָּר לְכַלּוֹתָם: ¹⁴וְאָעַשֶׂה לְמַעַן שְׁמִי לְבַלְתִּי הַחַל לְעֵינַי הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיאֵתִים לְעֵינֵיהֶם: ¹⁵וְגַם־אֲנִי נִשְׁאֲתִי יָדַי לָהֶם בַּמִּדְבָּר לְבַלְתִּי הִבִּיא אוֹתָם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי זִבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבַשׁ צְבִי הִיא לְכָל־הָאָרְצוֹת: ¹⁶וְעַן בְּמִשְׁפָּטַי מָאֲסוּ וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתַי לֹא־הִלְכוּ בָהֶם וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי חָלְלוּ כִּי אַחֲרַי גְּלוּלֵיהֶם לְבָם הַלֵּךְ: ¹⁷וְתַחַס עֵינַי עֲלֵיהֶם מִשַּׁחַתָּם וְלֹא־עָשִׂיתִי אוֹתָם כְּלָה בַּמִּדְבָּר:

¹⁸וְאָמַר אֶל־בְּנֵיהֶם בַּמִּדְבָּר בְּחֻקֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֶל־תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטֵיהֶם

Moreover, the references to Israelite idolatry in Egypt and to a divine warning to desist are traditions virtually unique to Ezekiel.

9. I acted for the sake of My name This motivation for divine restraint is that the name of God not be profaned among the nations (see also vv. 14,22). It has a parallel in Moses' intercessory appeal to God's self-interest in Exod. 32:11–13.

12. I gave them My sabbaths *Shabbat* is repeatedly singled out among the covenantal laws

(see also vv. 16,20,21,24). This emphasis is a characteristic of late, postexilic biblical literature (see Isa. 56:2–6). Desecration of *Shabbat* came to be regarded as the archetypal sin that caused the exile (Neh. 13:18; cf. Jer. 17:19–27).

it is I the LORD who sanctify them The idea that *Shabbat* is a sign between God and Israel, so that the people may know that the Lord sanctifies them, is derived from Exod. 31:13.

not keep their ways, and do not defile yourselves with their fetishes. ¹⁹I the LORD am your God: Follow My laws and be careful to observe My rules. ²⁰And hallow My sabbaths, that they may be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I the LORD am your God.

אֶל-תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּבִגְלוֹלֵיהֶם אֶל-תִּטְמְאוּ:
¹⁹ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּחֻקֹּתַי לִכוּ וְאֶת-
 מִשְׁפָּטַי שִׁמְרוּ וְעֲשׂוּ אוֹתָם: ²⁰ וְאֶת-
 שַׁבְּתוֹתַי קִדְּשׁוּ וְהָיוּ לְאוֹת בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם
 לְדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: