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Parsha Kedoshim Leviticus 19:01 to 20:27

by Julie Zhuk

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This Torah portion starts out with G-d stating to Moses to tell the Jewish people, "We should be holy because He is holy." He added on that everyone should revere their mother and father and sanctify the Jewish sabbath. This week's Torah portion is very important especially nowadays when it feels the world has become polarizing. This week's torah portion we learn some very important character traits that G-d wanted us to have. These are to love another fellow Jew and to judge them favorably. Back in the biblical days Jewish judges had to favor people in a righteous manner. When you go to a place of Jewish worship and you see someone not dressed as others, don't judge them. When you read a torah portion on the internet or a book they like give examples through stories. There's a Jewish man who came into a synagogue the day of Yom Kippur. He was wearing casual clothing. The rabbi asked the gabbai to give this man a chance to open the holy ark. The gabbai took one look at him and was flabbergasted. He didn't think it was right to give such a high honor to this new guest. Right then and there we can see that the gabbai was doing exactly what G-d doesn't want us to do to each other. The gabbai didn't understand at the time, but giving this new man in the synagogue a chance to open the holy ark would change things. Many years have passed since this incident happened and now this man has turned to Judaism and is a well-known sopher. G-d does not judge people on whatever level they are at in their practice of Judaism.

Therefore, He doesn't want Jewish people to judge each other. G-d wants Jewish people to give each other the benefit of the doubt. Despite what we think about our fellow Jews, we are to look at them favorably. By doing this we are acting in a holy way, which is ultimately what G-d is looking for us to do. Not only are we showing our holiness to G-d, but when we judge our fellow Jew favorably. He will judge us in that way as well. From this parsha some thoughts that come to mind is what would one do if they were given a significant amount of money? If someone responds that they would buy an airplane so they could never work again, fly wherever and whenever the response people would have to this may not be good. There is an idea that when people constantly want more, they are not happy with what they already have. that it is important that we look favorably at ourselves. We have to like ourselves for anyone to like us back. G-d wants Jewish people to pump up their own self-esteem and others around them. Every person needs to feel valued. It helps anyone feel they are not just a fly on a wall. Being valued means feeling important.

Haftarah for Kedoshim Ezekiel

This week's haftarah we hear from G-d stressing the importance of keeping up with his commandments such as observing the sabbath, staying the hell away from any idols. He has always pushed the Jewish people to reject any form of idol worship, for us to believe that He is the soul Creator of this Universe. The prophet that comes into the picture in this haftarah is Ezekiel. Ezekiel is able to hear G-d on a very direct level unlike the Jewish people. It is through

Ezekiel that we are reminded He took us out of Egypt and helped lead us into the holy land of Israel. This haftarah really focuses on staying away from idolatry.

G-d tells the Jewish people what laws to follow and the importance of keeping the Jewish Sabbath. Looking back at history, we didn't pick up G-d's request to stay away from idolatry the first time around. Even when we made it safely out of Egypt and into Israel, the Jewish people continued to stray away from serving only G-d. A large portion of the Jewish people rebelled against G-d and what He had in mind for the people back then. Many of these Jews did tend to find serving any form of idolatry and forgetting about G-d at least in the moment. G-d tried many times to bring us back and maybe He wasn't able to do it alone. That's why G-d sent many different prophets to let us know when we were not doing right by Him. When the Jewish people fell off the path of following G-d's ways, the prophet Ezekiel warned them they would be punished. This happened when they were in the desert. Ezekiel told them G-d wouldn't allow them entrance into the land of Israel. It's been many decades since any of this history happened, but I think sometimes it was easier for the Jewish people to turn to idolatry.

Whatever these idols any Jew ever worshiped were visible. People are drawn more towards anything they can actually see or feel with their own hands. G-d is this invisible infinite being and a force that no one can comprehend not on their own. Trying to believe in G-d or keep that thought in mind that He is real is hard because we can't see. People are not so drawn to believe in something they can't see. This is most likely where the idea of "free will" comes to anyone's mind. When I was a little kid, maybe eight years old, I asked a parent or someone in a Jewish school I went to why we cannot see G-d. I don't recall the answer I got, but maybe something along the lines of everyone consistently coming to Him for something. Being the infinite being that He is, staying true to the belief that He is the SOUL Creator of this Universe is very challenging for anyone.