

Connecting Beginnings and Endings

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Parashat Kedoshim

The implication of the numerous juxtapositions within verses comprising the Parasha

An interesting structural feature of Parashat Kedoshim is the significant number of verses which contain “Hekeishim” (lit. connections; tech. two diverse topics appearing within the same verse which are then assumed to share some sort of commonality). Whereas there is a disagreement as to whether two topics discussed in adjacent verses (Semichut HaParshiot) should be interpreted as being interconnected¹ it is impossible to deny that when ostensibly diverse Commandments and/or principles appear in the same verse, the overt juxtaposition is intended to draw attention to some sort of parallelism between the verse’s two elements.²

It would appear that the Hekeish as well as other hermeneutical techniques designed to establish connections between diverse topics and concepts³ reflect the assumption that in the cases of particular Tora Commandments, the best way to clarify an idea is by analogy with another such idea which is of similar standing, i.e., MiD’Orayta (of Tora, as opposed to Rabbinic, origin). Upon further consideration, when one recognizes that at the same time that the Tora is made up of finite, separate Commandments, all of these Mitzvot also constitute an organic integrated whole—this is well-symbolized when the Tora occasionally refers to the

¹ In Yevamot 4a, R. Yosef mentions a dispute regarding whether Semichut HaParshiot is a valid hermeneutic approach for all books of the Tora, or only for Devarim. Apparently the reason why everyone would agree with Devarim’s being interpreted in this manner is because this entire Biblical book is to have been presented to the Jewish people at a single point in its history, specifically just before Moshe’s death and the imminent entry of the Jewish people into Canaan. If Devarim is believed to be a single long valedictory address, then it is logical to assume that the various portions of the presentation were planned to follow one another and are interrelated. However, the other four books of the Bible describe events as well as the revelation of laws that could have taken place at different times, leading to the possible conclusion that two topics appear next to one another to reflect the chronology of when they occurred or were taught by Moshe, rather than their interrelationship with one another. Naturally, the issue of Ein/Yesh Mukdam U’Me’uchar BaTora (there is no/there is a chronological order to the Tora) also comes into play with regard to the books besides Devarim. If it is assumed that at least some portions of the Tora are self-consciously recorded out of chronological order, then it would logically follow that the contents of these other books should also be analyzed for interrelationships between the topics that appear next to one another.

² Despite the apparent universal acceptance of this principle, it is notable that Sephorno on the Hekeishim of 19:3 and 30, in contrast to all of the other traditional commentators such as RaShI, RaShBaM, Ibn Ezra, RaMBaN, Chizkuni, does not mention an interrelationship between the diverse elements of these verses, and addresses only the meaning of the verses’ respective components, independent of one another. Could this indicate that while this commentator acknowledges the hermeneutic principle and its role in the development and lending credence to aspects of the Oral Tradition, he views such an approach too esoteric to be considered within the framework of a Peshat (literalistic) interpretation of the Written Tradition? A thorough review of Sephorno’s entire Tora commentary would have to be undertaken in order to demonstrate whether or not such a hypothesis is warranted.

³ I.e., Semichut HaParshiot, Gezeira Shava (a common word appearing in two different places, which may be separated by considerable amounts of material).

Commandments in their entirety as “Mitzva”, the term for Commandment in the singular rather than plural form⁴ --finding similarities and parallelisms should be quite expected.

The Hekeishim of Parashat Kedoshim are the following:

- a. VaYikra 19:3 Obligation to respect parents;
Obligation to observe Shabbat.
- b. “ 19:11 Prohibition against stealthy stealing;
Prohibition against lying.
- c. “ 19:12 Prohibition against taking a false oath;
Prohibition against profaning God’s Name.
- d. “ 19:13 Prohibition against violent stealing;
Prohibition against withholding wages from a laborer.
- e. “ 19:14 Prohibition against cursing a deaf individual;
Prohibition against placing an obstacle in front of a blind person.
- f. “ 19:16 Prohibition against tale bearing;
Prohibition against standing idly while the blood of one’s fellow is being spilt.
- g. “ 19:17 Prohibition against hating another in one’s heart;
Obligation to give rebuke.
- h. “ 19:18 Prohibitions against taking revenge, bearing a grudge;
Obligation to love one’s neighbor as oneself.
- i. “ 19:26 Prohibition to eat meat that has not been Kashered (surface blood drawn out and removed);
Prohibition against engaging in forms of divining.
- j. “ 19:30 Obligation to observe Shabbat;
Obligation to respect the Mikdash (Tabernacle; Temple).

Attempting to explain the associations between the elements in the Hekeishim

With respect to some of the Hekeishim of Parashat Kedoshim, one can readily see a connection between the two elements:

In one instance, the first part of the verse **could lead to** the latter portion, i.e., (19:11) perhaps the thief will be tempted to lie in order to cover up his crime;

⁴See Devarim 6:25; 11:8, 22; 15:5; 19:9; 27:1.

In another case, the second part of the verse **defines** the nature of the act described in the first part,

i.e., (19:12) taking a false oath is itself a “Chillul HaShem” (a profanation of God’s Name);

Sometimes the two parts of a particular verse suggest **different forms** of essentially the same act,

e.g., (19:13) obtaining or keeping property/funds that rightfully belong to another is improper, whether they have been forcibly taken from someone or never given to him/her from the outset.

(19:14) taking advantage of a handicapped individual can never be morally defensible.

Then there are the instances where the end of the verse provides an **antidote** to the prohibition delineated at its beginning,

e.g., (19:17) openly giving rebuke will allow one to not keep resentment pent up within.

(19:18) rather than harboring negative feelings towards another, efforts must be made to feel relate to him/her positively.

Explaining some Hekeishim is more difficult than explaining others

Nevertheless, a number of verses remain where the two elements of the Hekeish lack an obvious connection between one another—19:3, 16, 26, 30. An additional curiosity is the appearance of Shmirat Shabbat (the obligation for Shabbat observance) in the first and last of these remaining Hekeishim, 19:3 and 30 respectively. Not only is Shabbat’s relationship to respecting parents and respecting the Mikdash not readily apparent, but why should it be necessary to repeat this specific obligation in verse 30 in such relatively close proximity to the original citation in verse 3? The rest of this essay will be devoted to exploring interpretive approaches aimed specifically at 19:3 and 30.

Accounting for the Hekeishim in VaYikra 19:3 and 19:30

Several distinct themes are advanced by various commentators while attempting to provide understandings for these two Hekeishim. **RaShI** understands the contents of 19:3, 30 as exercises in illustrating **which of the two elements in each of these verses takes precedence over the other**, i.e., when confronting dilemmas that pit the observance of Shabbat,⁵ respecting

⁵ RaShI’s primary source for his approach, Sifra Parshat Kedoshim #5 poses the dilemma of choosing between obeying and thereby respecting the wishes of one’s parent and faithfully observing Shabbat, not on terms of Shabbat specifically, but rather with respect to any Tora based Mitzva, i.e., the parent is demanding that the child violate anything that the Tora prohibits. According to Sifra, Shabbat in 19:3 then serves as the paradigm of Tora Commandments in general, and the end of this verse provides the justification for the trumping of the Commandment to respect one’s parents—“I am HaShem, your God” and parental authority as far as the Tora is concerned originates with Me, and consequently cannot be contradictory to My Own Affirmed Commandments.

But even if Shabbat in fact represents all other Tora Commandments, it is appropriate to reflect on why Shabbat appears in the Tora in this instance as exemplifying other Divine Directives. A simple answer would entail invoking the rule Dibra Tora BeHoveh (the Tora speaks using everyday examples). It is most likely that filial loyalty will be tested on Shabbat when families spend great amounts of time with one another.

one's parents and constructing the Mishkan/Mikdash against one another, which will prove to be the most inviolate, and therefore the most important?⁶ Citing Sifra (Midrash Halacha on VaYikra), RaShI maintains that despite the importance of respecting one's parent, should s/he demand that his/her child violate Shabbat, the child is not to listen. In a parallel vein, with respect to constructing the Mikdash, one might think that completing such a structure to allow for the proper worship of HaShem is of such great importance that the laws of Shabbat ought to be put on hold during the construction of the Temple. 19:30 therefore is intended to squelch such a line of reasoning, i.e., respect for the Mikdash is secondary to the observance of Shabbat.⁷

In stark contrast to RaShI's approach, whereby the Tora is imposing limits upon a parent's authority, both **RaShBaM** and **Chizkuni** see fit to understand the Hekeish of 19:3 as an attempt **to enhance the status of parents** in their children's eyes. The commentators claim that the language in Parashat Kedoshim is merely a repackaging and intensification of the implications of the Ten Commandments (Shemot 20:8-11 followed by 12; Devarim 5:12-15 followed by 16) where respecting parents and Shabbat are also juxtaposed next to one another

Klee Yakar, however, take a more theological tack in his answer to this question, and makes the case that the reason why a parent might think that s/he should be able to elicit compliance from a child is because since the parent is what has essentially brought the child into existence, s/he is due absolute fealty. The Commandment of Shabbat, however, refutes such thinking due to its emphasizing how HaShem Brought everything into existence at the time of Ma'ase Beraishit (the Creation) and Continues to Will the universe's existence on a daily basis. Therefore, even the parent must recognize that s/he too exists as a result of God's Plan, and consequently no parental command can rightly countermand the Directives Given by God. R. Yaakov Kaminetsky in Emet Le'Yaakov articulates a similar idea to that of Klee Yakar.⁶ Such a manner of thinking underlies the lengthy Talmudic discussion in Megilla 3a-b, where confrontations are set up between the following Mitzvot in an effort to determine which is more important than the other: a) public reading of the Megilla on Purim, b) the Temple service, c) public Tora study, d) involving oneself with the preparation for and actual burial of someone who has no one else to take care of these matters ("Meit Mitzva"), e) the preparation of the Korban Pesach (the preparation of the Pesach sacrifice that is to be eaten at the Seder), f) the circumcision of one's son. Whichever Commandment trumps the other is considered the more important of the two being compared. Berachot 19b is another example of a similar Talmudic line of reasoning.

⁷ Although Klee Yakar does not spell out the implications of his explanation regarding 19:3 in terms of 19:30, we could speculate that a parallel argument might run as follows: In contrast to respecting one's parents, where the object of reverence is a human being who by definition is also beholden to HaShem, constructing a Mishkan/Mikdash is in order to more properly worship God via sacrifices. So does it not stand to reason that Shabbat, which itself is a means by which we can demonstrate our respect for HaShem should not interfere with the Temple's construction? The technical explanation for why this argument is rejected in the end, is that while Shabbat observance is the fulfillment of a Divine Commandment, the construction of the Mishkan/Mikdash at best is a Hechsher Mitzva (a preparation for the fulfillment of a Commandment), which pales in comparison with an action that constitutes a full-fledged Mitzva in its own right, such as Shabbat observance. While it may be true that a sacrifice cannot be offered without such a structure, the structure in itself is a means to an end rather than an end in itself, and consequently takes a back seat to Shabbat. A homiletical explanation would maintain that if the point of Shabbat is to emulate God's Cessation from creative activity during Ma'aseh Beraishit, then to participate in the construction of a structure considered the most exalted of human creative activity—the reason why the 39 primary categories of prohibited activities on Shabbat are derived from the construction of the Mishkan is because such construction most closely resembles HaShem's Creation of the universe, then obviously the fabrication of the Mishkan/Mikdash cannot take place on Shabbat.

by means of Semichut HaParashiyot.⁸ Rather than concerning oneself with how a parent may abuse his/her position in terms of making unreasonable demands of a child, these commentators see the Tora's implicit suggestion paralleling the following Talmudic discussion:

Kiddushin 30b

Our Rabbis taught: It is said, (Shemot 20:12) “‘Kabed’ (Honor) your father and your mother”, and it is also said, (Mishlei 3:9) “‘Kabed’⁹ (Honor) the Lord with your possessions”. Therefore the Biblical text compares the honor due to parents with that due to HaShem. It is said, (VaYikra 19:3) “‘VeYareita’ (And you will fear) every man his father and his mother”, and it is also said, (Devarim 6:13) “The Lord your God ‘Tira’ (you shall fear), and Him shall you serve”. Therefore the Biblical text compares the fear due to parents with that due to HaShem. And it is said, (Shemot 21:17) “‘MeKallel’ (one who curses) his father or his mother shall surely be put to death”, and it is also said, (VaYikra 24:15) “Any man that ‘YeKallel’ (curses) his God, shall bear his sin”. Therefore the Biblical text compares the “blessing”¹⁰ of parents with that of HaShem.

⁸ R. David Zvi Hoffmann in his commentary on Sefer VaYikra points out that the Ten Commandments can be detected in Parshat Kedoshim in a different order than they appear in Shemot and Devarim.

	Shemot	Devarim	VaYikra
Do not engage in idolatry.	20:3	5:7	19:4
Do not make idols.	4-6	8-10	4
Do not take God's Name in vain	7	11	12
Observe Shabbat	8-11	12-15	3
Honor parents.	12	16	3
Do not kill.	13	17	16
Do not engage in sexual immorality.	13	17	2 (RaShI)
Do not steal.	13	17	11
Do not serve as a false witness.	13	17	16
Do not covet another's property.	14	18	18

R. Hoffmann makes the point that while in terms of importance, not practicing idolatry, and the converse, i.e., believing in HaShem, is ultimately of greater religious importance than one's relationship with his/her parents, the manner in which an individual develops a sensibility of how to relate to authority, and ultimately God Himself, is through interacting with his/her parents. Consequently, the order of the Commandments in Parashat Kedoshim where respecting parents (v. 3) appears **before** the warning against idolatry (v. 4) is due to a concern with the chronological developmental order in which these relationships evolve, as opposed to their relative importance vis-à-vis one another.

⁹ The use of a similar word allows for the utilization of the hermeneutic principle, Gezeira Shava (lit. a common expression), which asserts that the two subject areas wherein the common word appears are parallel in some way. Naturally a Hekeish is a far more convincing indicator of some sort of interconnection between the two subjects that appear in the same verse, in contrast to the Gezeira Shava illustrated here wherein the two verses in question are not only in two separate books (Shemot and Mishlei), but in two separate books on different levels of Divine Revelation, with books of the Tora being considered much more holy and representative of God's Will than Mishlei which is found in the Writings, and is most probably a reflection of Shlomo's wisdom granted to him by God in I Melachim 5:9, 26.

¹⁰ The term “blessing” is being used as a euphemism since the Rabbis are uncomfortable even describing such a heinous anti-religious action.

RaShBaM's and Chizkuni's approach suggests another manifestation of the principle of "Imitateo Dei" (emulating God) which is invoked numerous times in Devarim, in permutations of the phrase "to walk in His Ways".¹¹ Apparently, not only is one expected to try to internalize the various Divine Attributes of HaShem, as they are enumerated in Shemot 34:6-7, in order to enhance our interactions with people in general—as in Sota 14a, where we are encouraged to clothe the naked, visit the sick, comfort the mourner, and bury the dead by following HaShem's Example—but the Tora in Devarim 19:3 is directing us to extend our personal emotional attitudes about HaShem towards particular individuals, specifically our parents, who have "partnered" with HaShem to play key roles in the formation of our physical and spiritual beings.¹² Yet at the same time that we are following HaShem's Directive to show considerable respect to our parents, we are also learning how to relate better to Hashem Himself.¹³

A meta-principle emerging from these particular Hekeishim according to some commentators

While it could be maintained that the equation between Divine and parental honor that is being advocated by RaShBaM and Chizkuni paralleling Kiddushin 30b could be understood as when one is honoring one's parents, it is tantamount to honoring HaShem, a more profound synergy might also be suggested. One is to respect a parent because s/he is a correlative for HaShem during the period of formative human development. Successfully achieving the desired sensibility enables the individual to relate so much more profoundly to God, which in turn enhances the relationship with the parent. Additionally it is to be assumed that improved understanding of and obeisance to HaShem will significantly improve how one relates to all fellow human beings who are BeTzelem Elokim (created in the Image of God). What the Tora is then describing is a powerful, dynamic spiritual force that when properly applied and developed, can infinitely enhance all activities that are Bein Adam LeMakom (between man and God) as well as Bein Adam LeChaveiro (between man and man). Perhaps it is therefore extremely appropriate that the Hekeish between respecting parents and keeping Shabbat appears immediately after the adjuration to be Holy in 19:1, constituting the most direct means by which to achieve that aforementioned desired holiness.

While neither RaShBaM nor Chizkuni comment on the nature of the Hekeish in 19:30, we can attempt to apply the principle that they establish earlier with respect to 19:3, and including comments appearing in Sifra Parshat Kedoshim #78, to offer the following hypothesis: Sifra notes that just as in the case of Shabbat, an abstract concept that is a function of time,¹⁴ one does not stand in awe of Shabbat but rather of the One Who Commands that we must observe Shabbat, i.e., HaShem, so too with respect to the Mishkan/Mikdash, one must be careful not to think that its holiness emanates from its structure and its place, rather than from HaShem Who has Designated it as His Holy Habitation. To even further demonstrate how the

¹¹Devarim 8:6; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16.

¹² See Kiddushin 30b.

¹³ A similar concept seems to inform R. Akiva's advocacy of Shir HaShirim, i.e., the book describes the type of relationship that ought to exist between HaShem and the Jewish people, one that is first experienced vis-à-vis a love relationship with another human being. See R. Yuval Cherlow's development of this idea in <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/11/ART/927/678.html>

¹⁴ As opposed to when one deals with a tangible object, distinctions between the nature of days of the week can only be made based upon belief rather than empirical evaluation. You cannot impose some sort of test to be able to distinguish which day is Shabbat and which is not. Consequently, the Talmud can discuss the scenario where one is traveling in the desert, loses track of time and has to figure out a strategy by which to violate Shabbat as minimally as possible. See Shabbat 69b.

holiness of Mishkan/Mikdash is less tangible than one may think, Sifra continues and points out that just as Shabbat will always be in effect regardless of the physical state in which the Jew finds him/herself, so too the holiness of Mikdash will remain in place, even after it is destroyed, RaChmana LiTzlan (God should Save us from such a fate). It would appear that just as there is an intent to elevate and sanctify the status of parents in 19:3, there is a similar concern to try to place the proper perspective upon what the Mishkan/Mikdash represents and how it is not in any manner an attempt to substitute a concrete structure for Hashem Who is intrinsically and profoundly intangible.¹⁵ The Mishkan/Mikdash should be viewed as a reminder of HaShem in the same manner that Shabbat is; that there is holiness within the structure comparable to the holiness that informs Shabbat that is counterintuitive to typical human assumptions of time (it must be finite because we are) and place (only when a structure is intact does it have any significance). Consequently in the instances of 19:3 and 30, the Hekeish serves an iconoclastic purpose, to throw new light upon what we thought we had previously understood, and to enhance the spiritual dimensions of some of the people and things in the world that surrounds us.

¹⁵ The juxtaposition and “bookending” of the Parashiyot in Shemot describing the construction of the Mishkan, Teruma and Tetzave on the one hand, and VaYakhel and Pekudei on the other, with the sin of the Golden Calf described in Shemot 32, could lead to the possible conclusion that the Tabernacle serves a similar purpose as did the calf, albeit an obviously non-idolatrous one.