

Torah Portion Preview for Acharei Mot and K'doshim

Shabbat beginning April 28, 2023

This week's two portions begin with "after the death" [of Aaron's sons] and "holiness." We treat them as one. They open with detailed instructions to priests and Israelites for dealing with sacrifices and then create a "sandwich" with outer layers addressing mostly sexual prohibitions filled inside by our most nourishing "holiness" code—Leviticus 19. The beautiful code includes honoring parents and elders, championing fairness and honesty, tempering anger, sharing first fruits, and the thought-provoking prohibition of mixing animal breeds, crops, or fibers.

Converging commentaries provide perspective from two famous woman scholars and rabbis of the Los Angeles campus of Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, Tamara Eskenazi (Editor of *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*) and Dvora Weissberg (Rabbinical School Director). Each insightfully emphasized the context of these portions: wellbeing and holiness happen personally and in community through "love your fellow [Israelite] as yourself." Developmentally, the outer layers warn against fast-growing temptations that destroyed ancient communities. The holiness code between them encouraged slower growing, but enduring habits of caring, especially of the weak and outsider—innovative goals for that time. Maintaining holiness in ourselves and in our continually dispersed communities is a deep and worthy challenge for our times.

We invite all to come to synagogue in person or on Zoom on Friday night to hear a more in-depth interpretation from Rabbi Meeka (or this Sabbath's lay speaker). We also invite other views, interpretations, reflections, and even poems on each Torah portion. If you have something to contribute, please email it to RPC@templeadasshalom.org. This and prior previews can be found at Dr. David Dirlam's website by clicking on [Changing Wisdoms Projects](#).