

Acharei-Kedoshim Aliyah Summary

General Overview: This week's reading, *Acharei-Kedoshim*, begins with a detailed description of the service of the High Priest on Yom Kippur. Dozens of commandments are then discussed in this week's reading. Among them: the prohibitions against offering sacrifices outside the Temple; consuming blood; incestuous, adulterous, or other forbidden relationships; various mandatory gifts for the poor; love for every Jew, prohibition against sorcery; honesty in business dealings; and sexual morality.

First Aliyah: The High Priest is instructed to only enter the Holy of Holies chamber of the sanctuary once a year, on Yom Kippur; and even on this holiest day of the year, the entry into the Temple's inner sanctum must be accompanied by a special service and specific offerings which are detailed in this reading. The High Priest was only permitted to enter amidst a cloud of burning incense. Also, special white garments were worn by the High Priest on this day. While offering the day's sacrifices, the High Priest would "confess" on behalf of the entire nation, attaining atonement for the past year's sins. This section continues with a description of the "scapegoat" ceremony procedure.

Second Aliyah: After concluding the order of the Yom Kippur service in the Temple, the Torah instructs us to observe Yom Kippur as a Day of Atonement when we must abstain from work and "afflict" ourselves. The Jews are then forbidden to offer sacrifices anywhere other than the Tabernacle or Temple.

Third Aliyah: We are enjoined not to consume blood. When slaughtering fowl or undomesticated animals, we are commanded to cover their blood with earth. The Jews are admonished not to follow the depraved ways of the Egyptians and Canaanites. On this note, the Torah provides a list of prohibited sexual relationships. The list includes adultery, cohabiting with a menstruating woman, and forbidden close relatives.

Fourth Aliyah: The prohibitions against homosexuality and bestiality are mentioned. The Jews are then warned that engaging in these forbidden relationships will result in their expulsion from the Land of Israel — a holy land which cannot tolerate immoral behavior. G-d commands the Jewish

people to be holy. This section then briefly discusses several laws: revering parents; observing the Shabbat; prohibitions against idolatry; the obligation to burn "leftover" sacrificial flesh; the obligation to leave certain parts of one's harvest for the poor; not to lie, cheat, withhold wages, swear falsely, curse or mislead another.

Fifth Aliyah: More mitzvot: Not to pervert justice, gossip, be indifferent to a fellow's predicament, hate a fellow Jew, bear grudges, or take revenge. To reprimand a sinner, and to love every Jew. The following statutes are also given here: not to sow a field with two kinds of seed, wear a garment made of a mixture of wool and linen (*shatnez*), or crossbreed animals. The section also includes with the laws of one who commits adultery with a half-free maidservant. We are introduced to the laws of "*orlah*," the prohibition against eating the fruit of a new sapling for the first three years, and the obligation to sanctify the fruit of the fourth year. We are enjoined not to engage in witchcraft or prostitution, or tattoo our bodies. Men are instructed not to destroy the hair at the edges of their scalp or the corners of their beards. We are commanded to observe the Shabbat; respect G-d's sanctuary, Torah scholars and the elderly.

Sixth Aliyah: We are commanded to love converts. We are also enjoined to be truthful in business dealing by maintaining honest weights and measures. The Torah prescribes capital punishment for one who worships *Molech*; a form of idolatry which required human sacrifices. The Torah also describes the punishment which will befall the nation if they neglect to punish *Molech* worshippers.

Seventh Aliyah: The Torah sets the punishments for individuals who curse their parents and those who engage in prohibited sexual relations. We are instructed not to follow the customs and traditions of the heathens, and to be meticulous about eating only kosher foods. The Torah portion ends with an enjoiner that we be holy.