

Kedoshim / Sisterhood Shabbat

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This week's parashah, K'doshim, begins with k'doshim tihyu (you shall be holy). What does it mean to be holy? Rashi says that: "It is to be set apart from the ordinary, to be different". Ramban teaches us that holiness is about the spirit. In the Etz Hayim commentary, it says that "holiness is the highest form of human behavior."

What do we do to become holy? In this chapter God spells out what we need to do to become holy. First and foremost, is to honor your mother and your father.

It is a holy act to care for the poor and the strangers among you, which is why the next two commands are: When you make a sacrifice of well-being it needs to be eaten within two days; and "When you reap the harvest of your land you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field."

Some commands are self-explanatory: "You shall not steal or deal deceitfully or falsely with one another. You shall not defraud. You shall not insult the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind." I think that this means you should not purposely try to hinder another person's progress or lead them in the wrong direction for your benefit.

"Do not favor the poor", or in other words treat everyone equally. "Do not deal basely with your countryman" or another way to say that would be to not gossip or spread false rumors about anyone. "Do not profit by the blood of your fellow man", so don't better yourself at the expense of other people. "You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart." "Love your fellow as yourself." And, "You shall obey my laws." Putting it very simply, treat everyone as you yourself would want to be treated.

Sisterhood is defined as a close relationship among women based on shared beliefs and experiences. It can also be defined as a community or society of women. Yet, it is so much more.

Now the question becomes, how do I relate holiness to Sisterhood? I do not think of Sisterhood as holy per se. We are a collection of women who care deeply for our synagogue and have always and will always do what needs to be done for the betterment of ourselves and our members.

In order to judge what makes Sisterhood holy we have to look at the ideal Sisterhood woman:

The ideal Sisterhood woman honors her mother, or in my case my mother-in-law, by following her example of becoming active in Sisterhood. I did that and continue to do that to this day. She has shown me through the years how much enjoyment and fulfillment she experienced by being an active member of Sisterhood and she naturally wanted me to have the same experience. Over the years, I have grown considerably in my appreciation of Sisterhood and synagogue life as a whole. And it has led me to a new chapter in my life and to begin studying, along with my friend Lisa, to be a bat mitzvah.

The ideal Sisterhood woman is inclusive to all women who want to attend an event or join Sisterhood regardless of their financial status. We are a welcoming group of women. She encourages the stranger to sit with her during services or during a program so then she is no longer a stranger. I know when I first started attending services it was the women of Sisterhood who took me under their wing and made me feel that I belonged.

She is always honest and forthcoming, but in a way that will not hurt others. She does not gossip or spread false rumors. She is always helpful and willing to aid others when they need it. She does not lie, cheat, or steal, as this would not be very lady-like. She never holds a grudge, always saying what needs to be said in a respectful manner and then moving on.

I know that most of us as individuals do not have all of these attributes. It would be very hard to live a life that is that holy.

I would like to submit that the ideal Sisterhood woman cannot exist. What does exist is our Sisterhood community. Each member brings her ideals and values to the organization. It is only when we work together that we can achieve the spirit

of holiness. I now see that our Sisterhood does achieve this holiness. We achieve this holiness by listening to and hearing each other, taking advice from and giving it to one another. We each have our strengths and our weaknesses. Some of us like to work on programming, others on fundraising, some on holidays, and others on scholarships. There are still others who only attend the functions that we work so hard to present. We as a Sisterhood do so much that it is easy for a woman to find a place to fit in. We give the best parts of ourselves for the betterment of our Sisterhood and our Synagogue.

There is a little bit of the ideal Sisterhood woman in each of us, but it is only when we join together that we are the ideal Sisterhood women. It is our ability to merge our individual uniqueness into one cohesive group of women, a Sisterhood; that truly makes us holy.

This is why I feel blessed to say that I'm a part of this amazing Sisterhood.

Shabbat Shalom