

# MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 276

## FOR I AM HOLY

A Covenant Deep Dive into Leviticus 19:2 — *qedoshim tihyu (you shall be holy)* and *ki qadosh ani (for I am holy)*

*What Does It Mean That Yahweh Is Holy, How Can a People Be Holy Because He Is Holy, Who Was Commanded, What Does Holiness Look Like in Daily Life, and How Does the Covenant Believer Keep It Today? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response*

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The Message is Sent to the World

## REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

| ✡ JUDAISM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | ✝ CHRISTIANITY                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | ☪ ISLAM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leviticus 19 opens the Torah portion read as <i>Kedoshim</i> (holy ones). The Sifra teaches that it was spoken <b><i>“in full assembly”</i></b> because most of the essentials of the Torah depend on it, and a midrash finds the Ten Words inside the chapter. Rashi reads <b><i>“be holy”</i></b> as separation from the forbidden unions; Ramban as restraint even in permitted things. Maimonides did not count the verse among the 613, because it commands the whole Torah. The written verse comes first. | 1 Peter 1:15–16 quotes the verse: <b><i>“be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”</i></b> John Wesley’s teaching of Christian perfection (1766) and the Holiness movement built on it, and the Second Vatican Council taught a <b><i>“universal call to holiness”</i></b> for every believer (1964). Many churches divide Leviticus 19 into moral laws kept and ceremonial laws set aside. The Tanakh speaks first: what the chapter itself calls holy. | The Qur’an names God <b><i>al-Quddus (the Holy)</i></b> (Q. 59:23; 62:1), and the angels say, <b><i>“we sanctify You”</i></b> (Q. 2:30). It speaks of the holy land and the holy valley (Q. 5:21; 20:12). The human calling is set out as <b><i>tazkiyah (purification of the soul)</i></b> and <b><i>taqwa (God-consciousness)</i></b> (Q. 91:9–10; 2:197). The Tanakh gives the command in its first form: <b><i>“you shall be holy, for I am holy.”</i></b> |

## DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

## HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to five questions about **Leviticus 19:2**: what it means that **Yahweh** is holy, how a people can be holy because He is holy, who was commanded, what holiness looks like in daily life, and how the covenant believer keeps the command today. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations and their English meanings appear together in ***bold italic*** at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English version; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic commentary, modern scholarship, New Testament texts, church teaching, and the Qur'an and hadith are cited as historical and comparative reference only, in the tables and in the Three-Religion Audit — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

## TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

| DIVISION                  | BOOKS CITED                                                        | PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Torah</b>              | Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy                   | The first holy day; the Holy One at the sea and at Sinai; the six texts that ground holiness in <b>Yahweh</b> 's own; Leviticus 19 as the content of holiness; separation, the Name, the Nazirite, the stranger |
| <b>Nevi'im (Prophets)</b> | 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos | None holy like <b>Yahweh</b> ; the Holy One of Israel; holiness shown in righteousness; the Name profaned and sanctified; the counterfeits of holiness                                                          |
| <b>Ketuvim (Writings)</b> | Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes                                     | Holy is He; who may ascend the holy hill; the gracious man who resembles his Maker; restraint in permitted things; no man without sin                                                                           |

## COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

| CATEGORY                   | TEXTS CITED                                                                                                                                                                | PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Rabbinic literature</b> | Sifra, Kedoshim 1:1; Vayikra Rabbah 24:5, 24:9; Rashi and Ramban on <b>Leviticus 19:2</b> ; Maimonides, <i>Sefer HaMitzvot</i> , Root 4                                    | The assembly reading; the Ten Words in the chapter; separation versus restraint; why the verse is not counted among the 613 |
| <b>Modern scholarship</b>  | August Klostermann (1877), the name " <b>Holiness Code</b> " for <b>Leviticus 17–26</b> ; Stephanie Lynn Budin, <i>The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity</i> (2008) | Where the chapter sits in scholarly study; the debate over the <i>qadesh (cult functionary)</i> (Section IX)                |
| <b>New Testament</b>       | 1 Peter 1:15–16; Matthew 5:48; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7; Hebrews 12:14                                                                                                        | The verse quoted and applied in the Christian scriptures                                                                    |
| <b>Church teaching</b>     | John Wesley, <i>A Plain Account of Christian Perfection</i> (1766); Second Vatican Council, <i>Lumen Gentium</i> , chapter 5 (1964)                                        | Christian perfection; the universal call to holiness                                                                        |

| CATEGORY                                   | TEXTS CITED                                                                                                                              | PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Qur'an and hadith</b>                   | Q. 2:30; 2:197; 5:21; 20:12; 59:23; 62:1; 91:9–10; the popular saying “ <i>takballaqu bi-akblaq Allah</i> ” (adopt the character of God) | Holiness as a divine name; purification and God-consciousness as the human calling |
| <b>Miqdash Bethel<br/>613 Laws listing</b> | Nos. 10, 169, 448                                                                                                                        | Corrections and refinements (Section XII)                                          |

## I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — FIVE QUESTIONS, ONE VERSE

### I-A. The Questions as They Are Asked

Few verses are quoted more often and explained less. “*Be holy*” is printed on church walls, recited in synagogues, and echoed in the Qur'an's names for God, yet many who repeat it cannot say what holiness is, whether a human being can have it, or what it asks of him on a working day. The questions put to this Institution are direct:

**First:** what does it mean that **Yahweh** is holy?

**Second:** how can a people be holy “*for*” — because — He is holy? Is this a command, a promise, or both?

**Third:** who was commanded — priests only, or the whole people, and the stranger with them?

**Fourth:** what does holiness look like in daily life, and what does it not look like?

**Fifth:** how does the covenant believer keep **Leviticus 19:2** today, with no Temple standing?

### I-B. The Verse in Its Own Words

*“And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, You shall be holy, for I, Yahweh your Elohim, am holy”* (Leviticus 19:1–2)

The Hebrew of verse 2 reads:

דִּבֶּר אֶל-כָּל-עַדְת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדָשִׁים תְּהִיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

The heart of the verse is four Hebrew words: *qedoshim tihyu* (*you shall be holy*), קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ, and *ki qadosh ani* (*for I am holy*), כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי. The first two words are addressed to the people; the last two give the reason, and the reason is **Yahweh** Himself.

### I-C. Where This Study Stands in the Library

This study builds on earlier work and does not repeat it. **Doc 271** (*A Treasure Among All Peoples*) read **Exodus 19:5–6** and gave one section to the *goy qadosh* (*holy nation*). **Doc 273** (*Not in Your Heart*) studied **Leviticus 19:17**; **Doc 269** (*You Shall Rise Before the Gray Head*) studied **Leviticus 19:32**; **Doc 274** (*The Covenant Design of the Human Body*) studied the food laws, which close with the same words, “*be holy, for I am holy*” (**Leviticus 11:44–45**). **Doc 250** (*Holy to Yahweh*) studied the tithe as *qodesh* (*holy thing*), and **Doc 270** (*For Our Good Always*) studied why the commandments are kept. The present document studies the verse that stands over all of them: the heading of **Leviticus 19** and the ground of every command beneath it. It corrects two entries in the Institution’s 613 Laws listing and refines a third (Section XII).

Every finding below is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent Tanakh witnesses carry it (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). It is **Single witness** when only one text carries it. It is **Not in the text** when it is taught but the Tanakh does not say it.

## II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The vocabulary of holiness is a family of words built on one root, with its opposites beside it. The table sets out the terms this study relies on.

| HEBREW TERM                                                            | STRONG’S        | CORE MEANING                                                                                              | KEY TEXT                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>qadosh</i> ( <i>holy</i> ), קָדוֹשׁ                                 | H6918           | Holy; set apart; belonging to <b>Yahweh</b> . Used of <b>Yahweh</b> Himself and of what He sets apart     | <b>Leviticus 19:2; Isaiah 6:3</b>    |
| <i>qodesh</i> ( <i>holiness / holy thing</i> ), קֹדֶשׁ                 | H6944           | Holiness as a quality, or a thing that belongs to <b>Yahweh</b>                                           | <b>Exodus 3:5; Leviticus 27:30</b>   |
| <i>qadash</i> ( <i>to be holy / to sanctify</i> ), קָדַשׁ              | H6942           | To be holy; in other stems, to make holy, to treat as holy, or to sanctify oneself                        | <b>Genesis 2:3; Leviticus 20:7–8</b> |
| <i>qedoshim tihyu</i> ( <i>you shall be holy</i> ), קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ | H6918;<br>H1961 | Plural adjective with the imperfect of <i>hayah</i> ( <i>to be</i> ): a command and a promise in one form | <b>Leviticus 19:2; 20:26</b>         |

| HEBREW TERM                                           | STRONG'S        | CORE MEANING                                                            | KEY TEXT                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>kol adat</i> (all the congregation of), כָּל־עֵדֻת | H3605;<br>H5712 | The whole assembly of Israel, not one class within it                   | <b>Leviticus 19:2; Numbers 15:40</b>                            |
| <i>chol</i> (common), חל                              | H2455           | Ordinary; not set apart. Not a word for evil                            | <b>Leviticus 10:10; Ezekiel 44:23</b>                           |
| <i>tame</i> (unclean), טָמֵא                          | H2931           | Ritually unclean; unfit to approach the holy until cleansed             | <b>Leviticus 10:10; 11:44</b>                                   |
| <i>tabor</i> (clean), טָהוֹר                          | H2889           | Ritually clean; fit to approach                                         | <b>Leviticus 10:10; Psalms 51:10</b>                            |
| <i>badal</i> (to separate), בָּדַל                    | H914            | To divide one thing from another; used at creation and of Israel        | <b>Genesis 1:4; Leviticus 20:24, 26</b>                         |
| <i>chahal</i> (to profane), חָלַל                     | H2490           | To make common what was holy; to defile the Name                        | <b>Leviticus 19:8, 12; 22:32</b>                                |
| <i>miqdash</i> (sanctuary), מִקְדָּשׁ                 | H4720           | A holy place; from the same root                                        | <b>Exodus 25:8; Leviticus 19:30</b>                             |
| <i>qadesh</i> (cult functionary), קָדֵשׁ              | H6945           | A person “set apart” for the worship of other gods; forbidden in Israel | <b>Deuteronomy 23:17</b><br>[Hebrew 23:18]; <b>2 Kings 23:7</b> |

Four lexical observations govern what follows.

**First**, the first time the root appears in the Tanakh, **Elohim** sanctifies a day:

*“And Elohim blessed the seventh day and sanctified it”* (Genesis 2:3), *vayqadesh* (and He sanctified), וַיִּקְדֹּשׁ.

Before any person, place, or object is called holy, a portion of time is set apart by **Elohim**. Holiness begins with His act of setting apart, not with a human achievement.

**Second**, the ultimate origin of the root *q-d-sh* is debated among lexicographers; some connect it with separation, others with brightness or purity.

The Tanakh settles the meaning by use. What is holy is what belongs to Yahweh and is withdrawn from common use for His. That is why a day, a mountain, a garment, a tithe, a priest, and a whole people can all be called holy: each belongs to Him.

**Third, *qedoshim* (holy)** is plural. The command is spoken to a people, not to a hermit. Holiness in **Leviticus 19** is lived among parents, neighbors, workers, judges, strangers, and the aged.

**Fourth, *tihyu* (you shall be)** is the imperfect of *hayah* (to be). In Hebrew the same form can command (you must be) and promise (you will be). The context decides, and here the context holds both: **Yahweh** commands holiness and also says, ***“I am Yahweh who sanctifies you”*** (Leviticus 20:8). Section IV examines both sides.

### III. “FOR I AM HOLY” — WHO IS YAHWEH THE HOLY ONE?

The verse grounds everything in five words: “for I, Yahweh your Elohim, am holy.” Before asking what a holy people must do, the study must ask what the Tanakh means when it calls Yahweh holy.

#### III-A. Incomparable

The first meaning is that **Yahweh** is unlike anything He has made. Israel sang it on the shore of the sea:

*“Who is like You among the mighty ones, O Yahweh? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”* (Exodus 15:11)

Hannah prayed it at Shiloh: *“There is none holy like Yahweh, for there is none besides You, and there is no rock like our Elohim”* (1 Samuel 2:2).

The prophet hears **Yahweh** say it Himself: *“To whom then will you liken Me, that I should be equal? says the Holy One”* (Isaiah 40:25).

The seraphim cries it three times: *“Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory”* (Isaiah 6:3).

Isaiah’s own title for **Yahweh** is *Qadosh Yisrael (the Holy One of Israel)*, קָדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל, used some twenty-five times in his book (for example **Isaiah 1:4; 12:6; 41:14**).

The title holds two truths together: **He is the Holy One, beyond all comparison, and He is the Holy One of Israel, bound to a people by covenant.**

#### III-B. Holy in Righteousness

The second meaning is moral. **Yahweh**’s holiness is not a distant mystery that has nothing to do with justice. Isaiah says so in one line:

*“But Yahweh of hosts is exalted in justice, and the holy El shows Himself holy in righteousness”* (Isaiah 5:16)

Psalms 99 repeats “*Holy is He*” three times (Psalms 99:3, 5, 9), and between the refrains it names what His holy rule looks like:

*“The strength of the King loves justice; You have established equity; You have done justice and righteousness in Jacob”* (Psalms 99:4).

The Holy One is the just One.

### III-C. The Holy One in Your Midst

The third meaning is the most surprising. Yahweh’s holiness is the ground of His mercy as well as His judgment. Through Hosea He says to a people who deserved destruction:

*“I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am El and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath”* (Hosea 11:9)

Isaiah says the same of where the Holy One chooses to dwell: *“For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble”* (Isaiah 57:15).

When Isaiah saw the Holy One, his first words were *“Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips”* — and the next act was cleansing: *“your iniquity is taken away”* (Isaiah 6:5–7). The vision of holiness did not destroy the prophet; it cleansed him and sent him.

**Finding — the holiness of Yahweh:** Yahweh is holy as the incomparable One (Exodus 15:11; 1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 40:25),

as the One whose rule is justice and righteousness (Isaiah 5:16; Psalms 99:4),

and as the One whose holiness restrains His wrath and dwells with the contrite (Hosea 11:9; Isaiah 57:15; 6:5–7).

**Corroborated** on all three points. That Yahweh’s holiness means only remoteness or anger is **Not in the text.**

## IV. “YOU SHALL BE HOLY” — COMMAND, PROMISE, AND GIFT

### IV-A. He Sanctifies; You Sanctify Yourself

The Torah sets the two sides of holiness side by side in consecutive verses:

*“Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am Yahweh your Elobim. And you shall keep My statutes and do them: I am Yahweh who sanctifies you”* (Leviticus 20:7–8)

The first verse is a command: *vehitqaddishtem* (and you shall sanctify yourselves), וְהִתְקַדְּשִׁיתֶם. The second is a declaration: *Yahweh* is *meqaddishkhem* (the One who sanctifies you), מְקַדְּשְׁכֶם.

The same pairing appears at the Sabbath: “that you may know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies you” (Exodus 31:13),

and again at the close of the priestly laws: “I will be sanctified among the children of Israel; I am Yahweh who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your Elohim” (Leviticus 22:32–33).

**Holiness is therefore not a ladder by which people climb up to Yahweh.** He sets His people apart first — by bringing them out of Egypt, by giving them His Sabbath, by calling them His own — and then He commands them to live as what He has made them. The order is the same as at Sinai: deliverance first, then the commandments (Exodus 20:2; compare Doc 271, Section III).

**Finding: holiness is both Yahweh’s act and His people’s task** (Leviticus 20:7–8; 21:8; 22:32–33; Exodus 31:13). **Corroborated.** That human beings make themselves holy by their own effort alone is Not in the text. That **Yahweh’s** sanctifying makes human obedience unnecessary is also **Not in the text.**

#### IV-B. Six Times the Torah Grounds Holiness in His Own

Leviticus 19:2 is not the only place where the Torah says “*be holy*” and gives **Yahweh** Himself as the reason. The table sets the texts side by side.

| TEXT             | SETTING                                                  | THE REASON GIVEN                                                                    |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leviticus 11:44  | The close of the food laws                               | “for I am holy”; do not defile yourselves with swarming things                      |
| Leviticus 11:45  | The same, continued                                      | “I am Yahweh who brought you up out of the land of Egypt... be holy, for I am holy” |
| Leviticus 19:2   | The head of the chapter on daily life                    | “for I, Yahweh your Elohim, am holy”                                                |
| Leviticus 20:7–8 | After the laws against the worship of Molech and mediums | “for I am Yahweh your Elohim... I am Yahweh who sanctifies you”                     |
| Leviticus 20:26  | The close of the sexual and food laws                    | “for I Yahweh am holy, and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine”        |

| TEXT           | SETTING     | THE REASON GIVEN                                   |
|----------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Leviticus 21:8 | The priests | <i>“for I Yahweh, who sanctifies you, am holy”</i> |

Two things stand out. The command covers the table (Leviticus 11), the whole of daily life (Leviticus 19), worship and the household (Leviticus 20), and the priesthood (Leviticus 21): no area is left outside it. And the reason never changes.

Holiness is never grounded in a people’s superiority, its ancestry, or its usefulness, but in who Yahweh is. Outside Leviticus, the fringes carry the same call: *“that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy to your Elohim”* (Numbers 15:40).

#### IV-C. Walking in His Ways — and Where Imitation Stops

If the people are to be holy because He is holy, then holiness means resembling Him in some way. The Torah names that way:

*“Yahweh will establish you as a holy people to Himself... if you keep the commandments of Yahweh your Elohim and walk in His ways”* (Deuteronomy 28:9).

And it gives the clearest example of what walking in His ways means:

*“For Yahweh your Elohim is Elohim of elohim... who executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt”* (Deuteronomy 10:17–19)

He loves the stranger; therefore love the stranger. The Psalms show the same resemblance in two neighboring acrostic psalms that mirror each other.

**Of Yahweh:** *“Yahweh is gracious and full of compassion”* (Psalms 111:4).

**Of the man who fears Him:** *“he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous”* (Psalms 112:4). The righteous man is described in the words first used of his Maker.

But imitation has a limit, and the same chapter marks it. **Yahweh** says,

*“To Me belongs vengeance and recompense”* (Deuteronomy 32:35),

and **Leviticus 19** forbids the people to take it: *“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge... but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am Yahweh”* (Leviticus 19:18).

He shares His ways; He does not share His glory: *“I am Yahweh, that is My name, and My glory I will not give to another”* (Isaiah 42:8).

The holy people resemble Him in mercy, justice, truth, and love of the stranger. They never become what He is (Isaiah 40:25; Numbers 23:19).

**Finding — imitation:** to be holy as Yahweh is holy means walking in His ways — justice, mercy, compassion, and love of the stranger (Deuteronomy 10:17–19; 28:9; Psalms 111:4; 112:4).  
**Corroborated.**

Imitation stops at what **Yahweh** reserves to Himself, including vengeance and worship (Deuteronomy 32:35; Leviticus 19:18; Isaiah 42:8). **Corroborated.**

**That human holiness becomes equal to Yahweh's, or makes a person divine, is Not in the text.**

## V. “SPEAK TO ALL THE CONGREGATION” — WHO WAS COMMANDED

Most commands in Leviticus begin, “*Speak to the children of Israel.*” This one adds two words: “*Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel.*” The phrase is *kol adat (all the congregation of)*, כָּל־עֵדָת. Two chapters later, the laws of priestly holiness are addressed to “*the priests, the sons of Aaron*” (Leviticus 21:1).

**The contrast is deliberate.** The priests had their own added holiness for the altar; the holiness of Leviticus 19 belongs to everyone.

The chapter itself shows who is in view. “*Every man shall revere his mother and his father*” (Leviticus 19:3) speaks to sons and daughters.

The farmer leaves his corners (19:9);

the employer pays the worker before morning (19:13);

the judge refuses favoritism (19:15);

the merchant keeps just weights (19:35–36);

the father protects his daughter (19:29).

And the stranger is not outside the circle but inside it: “*The stranger who dwells with you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself*” (Leviticus 19:34).

The Torah applies one law to the native and the stranger who joins (Numbers 15:15–16).

The calling of the whole people was given at Sinai, “*you shall be to Me... a holy nation*” (Exodus 19:6),

and repeated on the plains of Moab: *“you are a holy people to Yahweh your Elohim”* (Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2).

The guard against abusing that truth was given at Korah’s rebellion, where the holiness of the whole congregation was used to deny the order Yahweh had appointed (Numbers 16:3–5). Doc 271 (Section VI-C) examined that guard in full.

**Finding — who was commanded: the call to holiness in Leviticus 19:2 is addressed to the whole congregation — men and women, workers and judges, native and stranger — not to a priestly class only (Leviticus 19:2, 3, 34; Exodus 19:6; Numbers 15:40; Deuteronomy 7:6). Corroborated. That holiness is the business of clergy while ordinary believers are merely common is Not in the text.**

## VI. WHAT HOLINESS LOOKS LIKE — LEVITICUS 19 AS ITS OWN COMMENTARY

### VI-A. The Refrain

**The Torah does not leave “be holy” as an abstraction.** It answers the question in the thirty-five verses that follow, and it signs each answer. Fifteen times after verse 2 the chapter closes a command with *“I am Yahweh”* or *“I am Yahweh your Elohim”*, אֲנִי יְהוָה (Leviticus 19:3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37). Each signature points back to verse 2. Leaving the gleanings for the poor is holy because Yahweh is holy; refusing to curse the deaf is holy because Yahweh is holy.

### VI-B. A Map of the Chapter

| VERSES | SPHERE OF LIFE     | WHAT HOLINESS REQUIRES                                                                                  |
|--------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3      | Home and time      | Revere mother and father; keep Yahweh’s Sabbaths                                                        |
| 4      | Worship            | Do not turn to idols or make molten gods                                                                |
| 5–8    | The altar          | Eat the peace offering within its time; do not profane what is holy                                     |
| 9–10   | Field and vineyard | Leave the corners, gleanings, and fallen grapes for the poor and the stranger                           |
| 11–13  | Truth and wages    | Do not steal, deal falsely, lie, or swear falsely; do not oppress or rob; pay the worker before morning |

| VERSES | SPHERE OF LIFE                     | WHAT HOLINESS REQUIRES                                                                                                         |
|--------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14     | The weak                           | Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; fear your <b>Elohim</b>                                       |
| 15     | The court                          | No injustice in judgment; no favor to poor or great; judge your neighbor in righteousness                                      |
| 16     | The tongue and the neighbor's life | Do not go about as a slanderer; do not stand idle by your neighbor's blood                                                     |
| 17–18  | The heart                          | Do not hate your brother in your heart; reprove him; no vengeance or grudge; love your neighbor as yourself ( <b>Doc 273</b> ) |
| 19     | The order of creation              | Do not mix kinds of cattle, seed, or cloth                                                                                     |
| 20–22  | Wrong and its remedy               | A case of wrong against a betrothed slave woman; the guilt offering; <i><b>“and he shall be forgiven”</b></i>                  |
| 23–25  | The orchard in the Land            | Do not eat young fruit for three years; the fourth year is holy                                                                |
| 26–28  | Blood, divination, the body        | Do not eat with the blood; no divination; no rounding the head for the dead; no cuttings or tattoos ( <b>Doc 274</b> )         |
| 29     | The daughter and the land          | Do not profane your daughter by harlotry, lest the land be filled with lewdness                                                |
| 30–31  | Sabbath, sanctuary, mediums        | Keep the Sabbaths; revere the sanctuary; do not turn to mediums                                                                |
| 32     | The aged                           | Rise before the gray head; honor the old ( <b>Doc 269</b> )                                                                    |
| 33–34  | The stranger                       | Do not wrong him; love him as yourself                                                                                         |
| 35–36  | The market                         | Just balances, just weights, a just ephah and hin                                                                              |
| 37     | Summary                            | Keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and do them                                                                         |

### VI-C. The Ten Words Echoed

Read beside **Exodus 20**, the chapter restates most of the Ten Words in its own language. The table sets the parallels out. They are an observation from the two texts themselves.

| THE TEN WORDS                                  | LEVITICUS 19                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Exodus 20:2 — <i>“I am Yabweh your Elohim”</i> | 19:2, 3, 4 — <i>“I am Yabweh your Elohim”</i>                                     |
| Exodus 20:3–4 — no other gods; no images       | 19:4 — do not turn to idols; no molten gods                                       |
| Exodus 20:7 — do not take the Name in vain     | 19:12 — do not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your <b>Elohim</b> |
| Exodus 20:8 — remember the Sabbath             | 19:3, 30 — keep My Sabbaths                                                       |
| Exodus 20:12 — honor father and mother         | 19:3 — revere mother and father                                                   |
| Exodus 20:13 — do not murder                   | 19:16 — do not stand idle by your neighbor’s blood                                |
| Exodus 20:15 — do not steal                    | 19:11, 13 — do not steal; do not rob                                              |
| Exodus 20:16 — no false witness                | 19:11, 16 — do not lie; do not go about as a slanderer                            |
| Exodus 20:17 — do not covet                    | 19:17–18 — no hatred in the heart; love your neighbor as yourself                 |

Adultery is touched in the case of the betrothed slave woman (19:20–22) and stated with its penalty in the next chapter (Leviticus 20:10). The holiness chapter is not a new law beside the covenant of Sinai; it is the Sinai covenant applied to the field, the court, and the heart.

#### VI-D. No Split Between “Moral” and “Ceremonial”

The chapter sets *“love your neighbor as yourself”* (19:18) directly beside *“you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed”* (19:19). It places the peace offering (19:5–8) next to the poor man’s gleanings (19:9–10), and the ban on tattoos (19:28) next to the honor of the aged (19:32). It closes by gathering all of them under one command: *“You shall keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and do them”* (19:37).

#### Some commands in the chapter depend on conditions that are not always present:

an altar for the peace and guilt offerings (19:5–8, 21–22),

the Land for the orchard law (19:23, *“when you come into the land”*),

a field for the corners (19:9).

Section X sets out how those commands are kept when their conditions are absent. But the chapter itself never divides its commands into a binding moral half and a discarded ritual half. All of them are signed “*I am Yahweh.*”

**Finding — the content of holiness:** **Leviticus 19** defines holiness as a whole life ordered by **Yahweh** — home, worship, field, wages, speech, court, heart, body, market, and the treatment of the weak and the stranger (**Leviticus 19:3–37**). **Corroborated** by the chapter’s own fifteen signatures and by its restatement of the Ten Words (**Exodus 20:2–17**). That the chapter divides itself into moral laws kept and ceremonial laws abolished is **Not in the text**.

## VII. HOLINESS AS SEPARATION — FROM WHAT, AND TO WHOM

### VII-A. Separated to Be Mine

The Torah defines holiness by separation, and it names both what Israel is separated from and to whom:

*“And you shall be holy to Me, for I Yahweh am holy, and I have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine”* (**Leviticus 20:26**)

The verb is *va-avdil* (*and I separated*), **וָאֵבֵדֵל**, from *badal* (*to separate*), the verb of creation:

*“and Elohim separated the light from the darkness”* (**Genesis 1:4**).

What Israel is separated *from* is named two chapters earlier: *“You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt where you dwelt, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you”* (**Leviticus 18:3**; compare **20:23**).

**The separation is from practices** — idolatry, the forbidden unions, child sacrifice, divination — not from human beings as such. The same chapter that commands holiness commands love of the stranger (**Leviticus 19:34**), and Ruth the Moabite was received into Israel (**Ruth 1:16**).

What Israel is separated *to* is **Yahweh** Himself: *“that you should be Mine.”* Holiness is not first a list of things avoided. It is belonging.

### VII-B. The Four Categories

The priests were charged *“to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean”* (**Leviticus 10:10**; compare **Ezekiel 44:23**). Four words, not two, make up the Torah’s map, and confusing them produces much bad teaching.

| CATEGORY              | MEANING                                   | WHAT IT IS NOT                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>qodesh (holy)</i>  | Set apart to <b>Yahweh</b>                | Not a quality anyone can claim for himself without <b>Yahweh's</b> setting apart                                                                          |
| <i>chol (common)</i>  | Ordinary; not set apart                   | Not evil. Bread, work, and the six days are common and good ( <b>Exodus 20:9</b> )                                                                        |
| <i>tame (unclean)</i> | Unfit to approach the holy until cleansed | Not always sin. Childbirth ( <b>Leviticus 12</b> ) and burying the dead ( <b>Numbers 19:11–16</b> ) make a person unclean, and both are good and required |
| <i>tahor (clean)</i>  | Fit to approach                           | Not the same as holy. Clean things may be common                                                                                                          |

Two errors follow from collapsing the categories. One treats everything ordinary as unholy and so despises work, marriage, and the body. The other treats every ritual impurity as a moral failing and so shames a mother after childbirth or a son who buries his father. The Torah does neither.

### VII-C. Holiness and the Name

**The opposite of holy in Leviticus 19 is not only unclean; it is profane.** Swearing falsely *“profanes the name of your Elohim”* (Leviticus 19:12),

and **Yahweh** says, *“You shall not profane My holy name, and I will be sanctified among the children of Israel”* (Leviticus 22:32).

Amos shows what profaning the Name looks like in a society:

*“They trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the humble; and a man and his father go in to the same girl, to profane My holy name”* (Amos 2:7)

Ezekiel shows the result on the world’s stage. Israel scattered among the nations *“profaned My holy name”*, because the nations said, *“These are the people of Yahweh, and they have gone out of His land”*.

**Yahweh** answers, *“I will sanctify My great name... and the nations shall know that I am Yahweh”* (Ezekiel 36:20–23).

The holiness of a people is public. It either sanctifies the Name before the nations or profanes it.

**Finding — separation:** holiness is separation from the practices of the nations and belonging to Yahweh (Leviticus 18:3; 20:23, 26). Corroborated. It is not contempt for people, since the same law commands love of the stranger (Leviticus 19:33–34; Ruth 1:16). Corroborated. Common is not evil and unclean is not always sin (Leviticus 10:10; 12; Numbers 19:11–16). Corroborated. The holiness or the profaning of a people is a witness to the Name before the nations (Leviticus 22:32; Amos 2:7; Ezekiel 36:20–23). Corroborated.

## VIII. HOLINESS IN THE HEART AND BEYOND THE LETTER

### VIII-A. Who May Ascend the Holy Hill?

The Psalms ask who may stand in the holy place, and their answer is not a ritual checklist:

*“Who shall ascend the hill of Yahweh, and who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, nor sworn deceitfully” (Psalms 24:3–4)*

Psalms 15 gives the same answer at greater length: the one who walks blamelessly, *“speaks truth in his heart”*, does not slander, does no evil to his neighbor, keeps his oath even when it hurts, and takes no bribe against the innocent (Psalms 15:1–5).

Isaiah asks the same question — *“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?”* — and answers with the same life: *“He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppression” (Isaiah 33:14–15).*

Holiness reaches the heart (Leviticus 19:17) as well as the hands.

### VIII-B. Restraint in Permitted Things

A person can keep every prohibition and still live for appetite.

Tanakh warns against that too. *“Be not among drunkards, among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty” (Proverbs 23:20–21).*

Even honey, a good gift, has its measure: *“Have you found honey? Eat as much as is sufficient for you, lest you be filled with it and vomit it” (Proverbs 25:16).*

And the Torah calls a voluntary restraint holy. The Nazirite, who for a set time took no wine and let his hair grow, is called *“holy to Yahweh” (Numbers 6:5, 8).* The word is *nazir (one set apart)*, נָזִיר.

### VIII-C. Not Withdrawal from Life

Restraint is not contempt for the good things Yahweh made. The first command to mankind was *“Be fruitful and multiply”* (Genesis 1:28);

a new husband was freed from war for a year to rejoice with his wife (Deuteronomy 24:5);

the tithe was eaten with rejoicing before Yahweh (Deuteronomy 14:26);

and the Preacher says, *“Go, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart, for Elohim has already accepted your works”* (Ecclesiastes 9:7).

The Nazirite vow was for a set time and had an end (Numbers 6:13).

**Finding — the heart and the measure:** holiness reaches the heart and the tongue as well as the hands (Psalms 15; 24:3–4; Isaiah 33:15; Leviticus 19:17–18). **Corroborated.** The Tanakh warns against excess in permitted things and calls a voluntary restraint holy (Proverbs 23:20–21; 25:16; Numbers 6:5, 8). **Corroborated.** That holiness requires celibacy or withdrawal from marriage, food, and joy is **Not in the text** (Genesis 1:28; Deuteronomy 24:5; 14:26; Ecclesiastes 9:7).

## IX. WHAT HOLINESS IS NOT — SIX COUNTERFEITS

The Tanakh is as clear about false holiness as about truth. Six counterfeits recur, and each has more than one witness against it.

**Counterfeit One — holiness by title.** Korah used the holiness of the congregation to claim what Yahweh had not given him (Numbers 16:3–5). In Jeremiah’s day the people chanted *“The temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh”* while they stole, murdered, and swore falsely, and the prophet called it *“lying words”* (Jeremiah 7:4, 8–10). A holy name worn over an unholy life is not holiness.

**Counterfeit Two — holier than you.** Isaiah records a person who practiced forbidden worship and then said to others, *“Keep to yourself; do not come near me, for I am holier than you”* (Isaiah 65:5). The Hebrew *qedashtikha*, קְדַשְׁתִּיכָּה, can also be read *“for I would make you holy”* (that is, by contact); either way, holiness is being used to push people away.

Yahweh’s verdict: *“These are smoke in My nose, a fire that burns all the day.”* True holiness does not despise the neighbor it is commanded to love (Leviticus 19:18, 34).

**Counterfeit Three — worship without justice.** *“What to Me is the multitude of your sacrifices?... Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean... learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow”* (Isaiah 1:11–17).

*“I hate, I despise your feasts... but let justice roll down like waters” (Amos 5:21–24).*

The holiness of **Leviticus 19** cannot be kept at the altar while it is broken in the field and the court.

**Counterfeit Four — holiness in an object.** When Israel carried the ark into battle as a charm, the ark was captured (**1 Samuel 4:3–11**). When the bronze serpent Moses made became an object of worship, Hezekiah broke it in pieces and called it *Nebushtan (a piece of bronze)* (**2 Kings 18:4**). No object, place, or building is holy apart from Yahweh’s presence and His people’s obedience (Jeremiah 7:4).

**Counterfeit Five — a “holy” role Yahweh forbade.** The same root that gives *qadosh (holy)* also gives *qadesh* and *qedeshah*, a man or woman “*set apart*” for the worship of other gods. The Torah forbids the role in Israel:

*“There shall be no qedeshah among the daughters of Israel, nor a qadesh among the sons of Israel” (Deuteronomy 23:17 [Hebrew 23:18]).*

The kings who reformed worship removed them (**1 Kings 15:12; 22:46** [Hebrew 22:47]; **2 Kings 23:7**). Translations often render the words “*cult prostitute*”; some modern scholars argue that ritual prostitution in the ancient Near East is not proven and that the words name cult functionaries of an uncertain kind (Budin, 2008). Both readings agree on the point that matters here: a person can be called “holy” in a cult that Yahweh abhors. Only what Yahweh sets apart is holy. (Compare **Doc 243**, *The Hire of the Harlot*.)

**Counterfeit Six — holiness as sinlessness.** The holiness chapter itself contains a guilt offering and the words “*and the sin which he has sinned shall be forgiven him*” (**Leviticus 19:20–22**).

The Tanakh says plainly, “*There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and does not sin*” (**Ecclesiastes 7:20**; compare **1 Kings 8:46**),

and “*If You, Yah, should mark iniquities, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, that You may be feared*” (**Psalms 130:3–4**).

**Holiness is a direction of life under Yahweh, with a way of return built into it — not a claim to have stopped sinning.**

**Finding — the counterfeits:** holiness claimed by title, used to despise others, separated from justice, placed in an object, borrowed from forbidden worship, or defined as sinlessness is rejected by the Tanakh (Numbers 16:3–5; Jeremiah 7:4–10; Isaiah 65:5; 1:11–17; Amos 5:21–24; 2 Kings 18:4; Deuteronomy 23:17; Leviticus 19:20–22; Ecclesiastes 7:20). Corroborated on each point.

## X. HOW THE COVENANT BELIEVER KEEPS LEVITICUS 19:2 TODAY

### X-A. What Waits on the Sanctuary and the Land

A few commands in the chapter assume conditions the Torah itself names. The peace offering and the guilt offering require an altar at *“the door of the Tent of Meeting”* (Leviticus 19:5–8, 21–22), and the prophet foresaw that Israel would remain *“many days”* without sacrifice (Hosea 3:4). The orchard law begins *“when you come into the land”* (Leviticus 19:23). The corners and gleanings assume a field (19:9–10). These commands are not cancelled, and they are not reassigned to new institutions. Where their conditions are absent, the believer keeps what the commands were for: reverence for holy things, return after wrong (Psalms 51:17; Hosea 14:2), and the open hand to the poor, which the Torah commands wherever a person lives (Deuteronomy 15:7–11). This is the same method **Doc 250** applied to the tithe.

**Everything else in the chapter stands wherever a believer lives:** honoring parents, the Sabbath, refusing idols and mediums, honest speech and wages, protecting the deaf and the blind, just judgment, guarding the heart, loving the neighbor and the stranger, honoring the aged, keeping the body as Yahweh made it, and just weights.

### X-B. Eight Practices of a Holy Life

| #   | PRACTICE                            | WHAT IT MEANS NOW                                                                                      | WITNESSES                                               |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| I   | <b>Know whose you are</b>           | Begin each day as one who belongs to <b>Yahweh</b> , not to yourself, your employer, or your appetites | <b>Leviticus 20:26; Deuteronomy 14:2; Isaiah 43:1</b>   |
| II  | <b>Hallow the home and the week</b> | Revere father and mother; keep the Sabbath as holy time                                                | <b>Leviticus 19:3, 30; Genesis 2:3; Exodus 20:8–12</b>  |
| III | <b>Keep worship pure</b>            | Turn from idols, mediums, and divination of every modern kind                                          | <b>Leviticus 19:4, 26, 31; Deuteronomy 18:10–12</b>     |
| IV  | <b>Leave the corner</b>             | Build a margin for the poor into your income, as the farmer left the edge of his field                 | <b>Leviticus 19:9–10; Deuteronomy 15:7–11; 24:19–21</b> |
| V   | <b>Be true in word and trade</b>    | No lies, false oaths, slander, late wages, or dishonest measures                                       | <b>Leviticus 19:11–13, 16, 35–36; Psalms 15:2–4</b>     |

| #    | PRACTICE                    | WHAT IT MEANS NOW                                                                                                  | WITNESSES                                                    |
|------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| VI   | <b>Protect the weak</b>     | Defend the deaf, the blind, the aged, and the stranger; judge without favor                                        | <b>Leviticus 19:14–15, 32–34; Deuteronomy 10:18–19</b>       |
| VII  | <b>Guard the heart</b>      | Refuse hidden hatred, vengeance, and grudges; reprove openly; love your neighbor                                   | <b>Leviticus 19:17–18; Psalms 24:4; Proverbs 4:23</b>        |
| VIII | <b>Return when you fail</b> | Confess, make restitution where a person was wronged, and return; the holy chapter itself provides for forgiveness | <b>Leviticus 19:20–22; 6:4–5; Isaiah 57:15; Psalms 51:17</b> |

### X-C. A Word to This Institution

The name of this Institution begins with *miqdash* (*sanctuary*), מִקְדָּשׁ, from the root of **Leviticus 19:2**. The Library applies the chapter to itself. **Leviticus 19:30** says, “*revere My sanctuary*” — **Yahweh**’s, not a sanctuary named by men. A name does not make a place, a people, or an institution holy (**Jeremiah 7:4**).

**Miqdash Bethel claims no holiness of its own. It points to the written covenant that defines holiness and asks to be measured by it like everyone else.**

**Finding — keeping the verse today:** the call of **Leviticus 19:2** binds every covenant believer now, through the commands of the chapter that never depended on the altar or the Land (**Leviticus 19:3–4, 11–18, 26–36**). Corroborated. The commands that depend on the sanctuary and the Land are kept in their purpose until their conditions return, and no human institution may claim to stand in their place (**Hosea 3:4; Leviticus 19:23; Jeremiah 7:4**). Corroborated.

## XI. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION READS “BE HOLY”

The table sets the three traditions against the findings above. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

| ELEMENT            | ✡ JUDAISM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | ✝ CHRISTIANITY                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | ☪ ISLAM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reading today      | <p>The Sifra and Rashi say the chapter was taught to the full assembly because most essentials of the Torah depend on it; Vayikra Rabbah 24:5 (Rabbi Levi) finds the Ten Words in it. Rashi reads “<i>be holy</i>” as separation from the forbidden unions; Ramban as restraint in permitted things, lest a person become “<i>a scoundrel within the license of the Torah.</i>” Maimonides (Root 4) does not count the verse among the 613, because it commands the whole Torah. Vayikra Rabbah 24:9: “<i>My holiness is above your holiness.</i>”</p> | <p>1 Peter 1:15–16 quotes the verse and applies it to “<i>all your conduct</i>”; Matthew 5:48 sets a parallel standard; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7 names sanctification as abstaining from sexual immorality; Hebrews 12:14 calls believers to pursue holiness. Wesley taught Christian perfection, a state of perfect love in this life (1766), and the Holiness and Pentecostal movements followed. The Second Vatican Council taught that every believer, not clergy only, is called to holiness (<i>Lumen Gentium</i> 5, 1964). Many churches keep Leviticus 19’s ethics and set aside its other commands.</p> | <p>God is <i>al-Quddus (the Holy)</i>, named with <i>al-Malik (the King)</i> (Q. 59:23; 62:1). The angels sanctify Him (Q. 2:30). Places are called holy (Q. 5:21; 20:12). For human beings the Qur’an speaks of <i>tazkiyah (purifying the soul)</i> — “<i>he has succeeded who purifies it</i>” (Q. 91:9) — and of <i>taqwa (God-consciousness)</i>, “<i>the best provision</i>” (Q. 2:197). The saying “<i>adopt the character of God</i>” is widely quoted but is not found in the canonical hadith collections.</p> |
| Covenant strength  | <p>Keeps the chapter whole and reads it as the center of the Torah, as its fifteen signatures do. Ramban’s restraint matches <b>Numbers 6:5, 8</b> and <b>Proverbs 23:20–21</b>. “<i>My holiness is above yours</i>” guards the line the Tanakh draws (<b>Isaiah 40:25</b>).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>Peter grounds holiness in the written text (“<i>it is written</i>”) and applies it to conduct, as <b>Leviticus 19</b> does. The universal call to holiness agrees with “<i>all the congregation</i>” (<b>Leviticus 19:2</b>).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>Joining the Holy with the King matches <b>Psalms 99:1–5</b> and <b>Isaiah 6:3–5</b>. <i>Tazkiyah</i> of the soul matches <b>Psalms 24:4</b> and <b>Leviticus 19:17</b>: holiness reaches the heart.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Covenant departure | <p>Where rabbinic fences become the meaning of holiness itself (Ramban, following Berakhot 53b, reads “<i>sanctify yourselves</i>” in <b>Leviticus 11:44</b> as hand-washing before and after meals), the Tanakh does not say it (<b>Deuteronomy 4:2</b>). The extension of “<i>revere My sanctuary</i>” to synagogues is rabbinic (Section XII).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>Dividing Leviticus 19 into moral and ceremonial halves is a division the chapter does not make (Section VI-D). Teaching a state of sinless perfection stands against <b>Ecclesiastes 7:20</b> and <b>Leviticus 19:20–22</b>. Treating holiness as conferred by office alone repeats the error of <b>Numbers 16:3</b>.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>The Qur’an’s human calling stops short of the Tanakh’s direct command, “<i>you shall be holy, for I am holy</i>”. Where imitation of God is taught, it often rests on the uncanonical saying rather than on the written witness of <b>Deuteronomy 10:18–19</b> and <b>28:9</b>.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

| ELEMENT                 | ✧ JUDAISM                                                                                                                                        | ✝ CHRISTIANITY                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | ☪ ISLAM                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Covenant witness</b> | The reading of the chapter to the whole assembly preserves <b>Leviticus 19:2</b> 's own address: holiness belongs to every member of the people. | Read from the Tanakh outward, <i>“be perfect”</i> (Matthew 5:48) is the language of <i>tamim</i> ( <i>whole, blameless</i> ) ( <b>Genesis 17:1</b> ; <b>Deuteronomy 18:13</b> ): a whole-hearted walk, not a claim of sinlessness. | Q. 91:9–10 — the one who purifies the soul succeeds; the one who corrupts it fails — is the choice of <b>Deuteronomy 30:15–19</b> set before every reader. |

## XII. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library’s rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else’s. Three entries in the Institution’s listing *The 613 Laws of the Tanakh* touch **Leviticus 19** and need correction or refinement.

**Correction 1 — No. 169 and Leviticus 19:26.** The listing gives *“Not to eat or drink like a glutton or a drunkard (not to rebel against father or mother) (Lev. 19:26; Deut. 21:20).”* **Leviticus 19:26** says *“You shall not eat with the blood; you shall not practice divination or soothsaying.”* It says nothing about gluttony. Reading it as a warning to the glutton is a rabbinic interpretation. Tanakh’s own witnesses for the glutton and drunkard are **Deuteronomy 21:20** and **Proverbs 23:20–21**. The entry should cite those, and **Leviticus 19:26** should be listed with the laws of the blood and of divination.

**Correction 2 — No. 448 and the sanctuary.** The listing gives *“To revere the Sanctuary (Lev. 19:30) (today, this applies to synagogues).”* **Leviticus 19:30** says *“revere My sanctuary”* — Yahweh’s own *miqdash* (*sanctuary*), at the place He chooses (**Deuteronomy 12:5**; see **Doc 251**). The application to synagogues is a rabbinic extension, not the text. The parenthesis should be removed or marked as rabbinic practice.

**Refinement 3 — the absence of Leviticus 19:2.** The listing has no entry for *“you shall be holy.”* This follows Maimonides, who did not count commands that cover the whole Torah. Tanakh supports the point that **Leviticus 19:2** stands over the chapter’s commands rather than beside them (Section VI). A note at No. 10 (*“To imitate His good and upright ways”*, **Deuteronomy 28:9**) should say that **Leviticus 19:2**, **11:44–45**, and **20:26** are the heading of the commandments, not one more among them.

Earlier library material on holiness checked for this study — **Doc 271** (Section VII), **Doc 274** (Section II-B), and **Doc 250** — cites the holiness texts correctly and needs no change.

## XIII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON LEVITICUS 19:2

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

| #   | COVENANT DECLARATION                                                                                                                                     | BASIS                                                                                  |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I   | <b>Yahweh</b> alone is holy by nature: incomparable, and holy in righteousness and in mercy.                                                             | <b>Exodus 15:11; 1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 5:16; 40:25; Hosea 11:9</b>                      |
| II  | Holiness is first <b>Yahweh's</b> gift — He sanctifies — and then His people's task.                                                                     | <b>Leviticus 20:7–8; 21:8; 22:32–33; Exodus 31:13</b>                                  |
| III | The call is addressed to the whole congregation, native and stranger, not to a priestly class only.                                                      | <b>Leviticus 19:2, 34; Exodus 19:6; Numbers 15:40</b>                                  |
| IV  | To be holy is to walk in His ways — justice, mercy, and love of the stranger — never to take what He reserves to Himself.                                | <b>Deuteronomy 10:17–19; 28:9; Psalms 111:4; 112:4; Deuteronomy 32:35; Isaiah 42:8</b> |
| V   | Holiness is lived in the home, the field, the market, the court, and the heart; the chapter that commands it makes no split between worship and justice. | <b>Leviticus 19:3–37; Isaiah 1:11–17; Amos 2:7</b>                                     |
| VI  | Holiness separates from the practices of the nations and joins to <b>Yahweh</b> ; it never licenses contempt for others.                                 | <b>Leviticus 18:3; 20:26; 19:33–34; Isaiah 65:5</b>                                    |
| VII | Holiness is not sinlessness; the holy chapter itself provides for forgiveness, and the Holy One dwells with the contrite.                                | <b>Leviticus 19:20–22; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Psalms 130:3–4; Isaiah 57:15</b>             |

## XIV. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Behind the question of what **Leviticus 19:2** means there is usually a person who has heard “*be holy*” all his life and either despairs of it or has made it a badge. Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

**First: begin with Him, not with yourself.** The verse's reason is “*for I am holy.*” Look at the Holy One before you look at your own record — at the sea, at Sinai, in Isaiah's vision (**Exodus 15:11; Isaiah 6:3**).

**Second: receive before you strive.** *“I am Yahweh who sanctifies you”* (Leviticus 20:8). You are set apart because He brought you to Himself; now live as what He has made you.

**Third: let Leviticus 19 define the word.** Holiness this week means honoring your parents, keeping the Sabbath, paying what you owe on time, telling the truth, leaving a margin for the poor, refusing a grudge, rising for the aged, and welcoming the stranger (**Leviticus 19:3–36**).

**Fourth: watch for the counterfeits in yourself first.** The one who says *“I am holier than you”* is smoke in **Yahweh’s** nose (**Isaiah 65:5**). Holiness that despises the neighbor is not holiness.

**Fifth: when you fail, return.** The chapter that says *“be holy”* also says *“and he shall be forgiven”* (Leviticus 19:22). The High and Holy One dwells *“with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit”* (Isaiah 57:15).

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| REFERENCE                            | SUBJECT                                                        | SECTION                                   |
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*“Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, Yahweh your Elohim, am holy.”*

**Leviticus 19:2 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh**

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**MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION**

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