

# What is a Holy? Land

פרשת אחרי מות -

קדושים

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**ויקרא י"ח**

(כד) אֶל-תִּטְמְאוּ בְכָל-אֲלֹהֵי כְּי  
בְכָל-אֲלֹהֵי נְטִמָּאוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-אֲנִי  
מְשַׁלַּח מִפְּנֵיכֶם: (כה) וּתִטְמְאוּ הָאָרֶץ  
וְאֶפְקֹד עֲוֹנָהּ עָלַיָּהּ וּתְקֹא הָאָרֶץ  
אֶת-יִשְׁבֵּיהָ: (כו) וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֹתָם  
אֶת-חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ מִכָּל  
הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הָאֵלֹהֵי הָאֲזֹחַ וְהַגֵּר הַגֵּר  
בְּתוֹכְכֶם: ... (כח) וְלֹא-תִקְיֹא הָאָרֶץ

אַתְּכֶם בְּטַמְאָתְכֶם אֵתְהָ כִּי אֲשַׁר קָאָה  
אֶת־הַגּוֹי אֲשַׁר לְפָנֶיכֶם: (כט)

## Leviticus 18

(24) Do not defile yourselves in any of those ways, for it is by such that the nations that I am casting out before you defiled themselves. (25) Thus the land became defiled; and I called it to account for its iniquity, and the land spewed out its inhabitants. (26) But you must keep My laws and My rules ... (28) So let not the land spew you out for defiling it, as it spewed out the nation that came before you.

According to [Maimonides'] view, holiness cannot be characterized as ontological or essentialist. Holy places, persons, times, and objects are in no objective way distinct from profane places, persons, times, and objects. Holiness is the name given to a certain class of people, objects, times, and places which the Torah marks off. According to this view holiness is a status, not a quality of existence. It is a challenge, not a

given; normative, not descriptive.  
(Menachem Kellner. Maimonides  
Confrontation with Mysticism)

The land of Israel is the Holy Land and the Temple Mount is a holy place only by virtue of the Mitzvot linked to these locations. These Mitzvot were not associated with the land and the mountain because these are “holy.” On the contrary, their “holiness” derives from the Mitzvot associated with them. The idea that a specific country or location has an intrinsic “holiness” is an indubitably idolatrous idea. (Yishayahu Leibowitz. Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State)

**רש"י על ויקרא י"ח:כ"ח:א'**

**(א) ולא תקיא הארץ אתכם. מְשָׁל**

**לְבֹן מְלֶךְ שֶׁהֶאֱכִילוּהוּ דְבַר מְאוּס, שְׂאִין**

**עוֹמֵד בְּמַעְיוֹ אֶלָּא מְקִיאוֹ, כִּדְ אֶרֶץ**

**יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵינָהּ מְקִימַת עוֹבְרֵי עֲבָרָה**

**(ספרא סוף קדושים), וְתַרְגוּמוֹ וְלֹא**

תְּרוּקוֹן, לְשׁוֹן רְקוּן — מְרִיקָה עֲצָמָה  
מֵהֶם:

### Rashi on Leviticus 18:28:1

(1) THAT THE LAND VOMIT NOT YOU OUT — A parable! This may be compared to the case of a prince (i. e. a sensitive, refined person) to whom one gives a disgusting thing to eat which he cannot retain on his stomach but vomits it out thus Eretz-Yisrael is unable to retain sinners on its soil (Sifra, Kedoshim, Chapter 12 14). The Targum renders it by: ולא תרוקן a term for "emptying out" — it (the earth) empties itself of them.

רמב"ן על ויקרא י"ח:כ"ה:א'  
(א) ותטמא הארץ ואפקוד עונה  
עליה ותקיא הארץ והענין כי השם  
הנכבד ברא הכל ושם כח התחתונים  
בעליונים ונתן על כל עם ועם  
בארצותם לגוייהם כוכב ומזל ידוע  
כאשר נודע באצטגנינות... והנה השם  
הנכבד הוא אלהי האלהים ואדוני



האדונים לכל העולם אבל ארץ ישראל  
אמצעות הישוב היא נחלת ה' מיוחדת  
לשמו לא נתן עליה מן המלאכים קצין  
שוטר ומושל בהנחילו אותה לעמו  
המיחד שמו זרע אוהביו וזהו שאמר  
(שמות יט ה) והייתם לי סגולה מכל  
העמים כי לי כל הארץ וכתיב (ירמיהו  
יא ד) והייתם לי לעם ואנכי אהיה לכם  
לאלהים לא שתהיו אתם אל אלהים  
אחרים כלל ... כי הבדיל אותנו מכל  
העמים אשר נתן עליהם שרים  
ואלהים אחרים בתתו לנו את הארץ  
שיהיה הוא יתברך לנו לאלהים ונהיה  
מיוחדים לשמו...

### **Ramban on Leviticus 18:25:1**

**(1) And the land was defiled and I visited the iniquity upon it and the land vomited: ...**But the secret of the matter is in the verse (Deuteronomy 32:8-9), "In the Most High's giving inheritances to the nations, in His separation of people, the borders of the peoples were set up, etc. For the portion of the Lord is His people, etc."  
And the matter is that the honorable

God created everything and placed the power over the ones below in the ones above and placed over each and every people in their lands according to their nations a star and a specific constellation, as is known in astrology. And this is that which is stated (Deuteronomy 4:19), "that the Lord, your God, distributed them to all of the peoples" - as He distributed constellations in the skies to all of them ... but upon the land of Israel - the center of the [world's] habitation, the inheritance of God [that is] unique to His name - He did not place a captain, officer or ruler from the angels, in His giving it as an inheritance to his nation that unifies His name - the seed of His beloved one. And this is what it stated (Exodus 19:5), "and you will be for Me a treasure from all of the nations, as all of the world is Mine"; and it is written (Jeremiah 11:4), "and you will be for Me a people and I will be for you a God" - that you should not be to other gods (powers) at all.

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