

#31 Emor Leviticus 21:1-24:25

By Moshe Schwab

While Praying:

- * God sees our peace and joy.
- * Rest in God; protect your mind and heart.
- * Do not stay in the congregation of darkness. They are not looking out for your best interests.
- * Allow the peace and blessing of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Emor means, “say.” This portion begins by saying that the Cohanim (priests) were not to make themselves unclean by touching the dead unless it was a close relative. They are also not do rituals that the pagans did like cutting gashes in their skin. They are to be holy for God. The Cohanim are also not to marry a divorced woman, a prostitute, or a woman who is not a virgin. The daughter of a Cohanim is to be pure. The Cohanim are consecrated and anointed with oil.

God's leaders are consecrated to God and are to be shown honor. Giving them honor gives honor to God. Shaul (Paul) said that leaders are to be given double honor (1 Timothy 5:17-18). No descendant of Aaron who has a defect should be allowed near the veil. No one who is unclean is to come near the holy things until he does what is necessary to be clean again.

No outsider or servant is to eat holy food (that is for the priests). If eaten accidentally the person is to restore what is eaten plus 1/5. Free will offerings should have no blemish or any type of defect. God has sanctified Israel to be their God. They are to keep Shabbat, Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Shavuot, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. They should not reap to the corners of their fields. The details and dates are given for each feast. They were to use pure oil for the menorah and it was not to go out. They were to make bread for the tabernacle and the Cohanim were to eat it there. Those that blaspheme the name of the Lord or murder another man were to be put to death and those that cause injury were to make restitution. The portion concludes with them stoning a man who was blaspheming the Lord.

This portion has laws about contact with the dead, how to keep hair, marriage of the priests, those who are qualified to offer sacrifices, who can eat from the donations, a mikvah requirement to be clean, animal sacrifices, the Lord's name and not to use it blasphemously, the Lord's feasts, leaving crops for the poor, fasting on Yom Kippur, living in booths on Sukkot, using clear oil for the Mishkan lamps, and restitution.

In last weeks portion we learned about the importance of not committing lashon harah (evil speaking). Shaul talks about saying good things in Philippians 4 and Ya'akov (James) talks about how the tongue can be used for good or evil. Each portion of the Torah gives us important background on things talked about in the New Testament portion. Without this background people tend to apply the New Testament scriptures mindlessly.

Both Yeshua and Shaul used the Old Testament for their teachings. Should we keep God's feasts? They are God's feasts so why wouldn't we? It amazes me that people observe man-made feasts, holidays, and celebrations; but when it comes to God's feasts, they put them down. The are in essence saying to God that His appointed times are not important.

If we are not to observe God's feasts as some say (which seems ludicrous), then why are we supposed to look forward to observing them in the new heaven and earth?! Isaiah 66:22-23 NKJV, "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, 'So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,' says the LORD." New Moons celebrate the calendar year set up by God and which is used to celebrate God's feasts. The Sabbath is God's weekly feast.

Some laws like keeping God's feasts are easily applied, others can be applied appropriately (like making restitution), and others can't be done. For example, we can't enforce the death penalties from the Bible because our country defines how and when that is to be done. We should not be an evil doer in the country we live in. Our country does allow for restitution for damages; that is something the Bible tells us to do also. I've heard people say things like we can't observe God's feasts in Jerusalem anymore so we can't do them. That is just ridiculous! Who can't rest on Shabbat? Yeshua said that we can worship God wherever we are now. "Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father;" John 4:21NKJV.

We can keep God's feasts wherever we are. That's what early believers in Yeshua did. People just make up excuses not to follow God. Just because they don't follow God, you don't have to follow their bad example. We should stop fighting God and try to do what He tells us to do. Drop your philosophy of life and start doing what the Bible says. The Bible tells us to help others and the poor. My niece's husband once asked me why Christians hate the poor. What a poor example Christians have been.

We should do things God's way even though we may not understand why. Perhaps limiting contact with the dead could help reduce problems related to disease. Perhaps it was the custom of idol worshippers to do specific things related to idol worship with their hair. We probably should be careful not to emulate any practice associated with idol worship or any of the despicable things that unbelievers do.

Should we still fast on Yom Kippur (the day of forgiveness of sins)? Yes, because Yochanan (John) said we all sin and need to confess our sin in 1 John. Since he is Jewish, he probably is not only referring to our daily acts of repentance and confession (which we should be doing), but also to a general introspection and confession of sins on Yom Kippur that may reveal other sins we need to repent of.

Should we live in booths on Sukkot? This command is directed at Israel and perhaps has more to do with the Sinai covenant. Not all commands are pertinent for the messianic believer although we can surely participate if we so choose. Living in booths should remind us of God's care for Israel and for us.

For messianic believers, Sukkot should remind us that God does indeed care for His people and that we are to seek His help at the throne of His favor as it says in Hebrews 4:16. In Temple worship, only the high priest could enter the holiest place, but that is not true for the messianic

believer. There is a change of perspective in the Brit Chadashah (the New Testament portion); the Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Spirit) lives in us so we each have direct access to God.

Also, we should be ever mindful to help the poor and if we damage anything, we should make restitution. It has always been understood that the "eye for an eye" in this portion did not mean a literal eye for an eye, but that restitution should be made to others we've harmed.

The counting the Omer at this time before Shavuot perhaps reminds us of the anticipation of God's provision as Israel was harvesting their food at this time. He not only provides for us physically, but gave us the law on Shavuot (Pentecost) and the Holy Spirit on Shavuot. Noah celebrated Shavuot for God saving him from the flood.

The Torah repeats itself a lot. Repetition is often used for emphasis in the Bible. We should always want more of God and be willing listeners and doers. There is a difference between Greek education and Jewish studies. The Greeks learn to improve themselves, but the ancient believers in God learned to be dedicated to God. It is not a division of focus as some say; our focus should be on living right and following God, on being dedicated to God.

The Haftarah for Emor is Ezekiel 44:15- 31. The Cohanim who are the descendants of Tzadok who took care of God's house when Israel went astray are to perform the service of the sanctuary. They are to wear linen; nothing that will make them sweat. They are to trim their hair, marry a virgin or the widow of a Cohen (priest), teach the people what is clean or unclean, and judge the people. They are to keep God's Shabbats and festivals holy and not come in contact with a dead person unless they are a close relative. They belong to God, they are to live off the offerings, and they are not to eat anything that dies naturally or is torn to death.

This Haftarah portion reiterates some of the commands for the Kohanim given in Leviticus. They were to teach the people God's commands. God is to be their inheritance. We as believers in Messiah have literally inherited God through the Holy Spirit and have the Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Spirit) living in us. Rabbi Shaul (Paul) says that the Ruach HaKodesh is proof of our inheritance in Ephesians 1:13-14; of course, we have to be faithful and live like a true child of God. If we disown God and don't live like a child of God, He will disown us. **"If we endure**, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us." 2 Timothy 2:12 NKJV.

One thing for sure is that God wants us to have peace and joy. Isn't that great. I was thinking this week about this one person I knew years ago who complained all the time. He was quite outspoken and clamorous about his opinions. Don't we all have to step back and try to figure out why these kinds of people are acting up like that? I came to understand that he was a very manipulative and angry person. I wasn't going to live like him and be so discordant.

We have a great God who wants to bless us and give us a good life. It would have been a dishonor to God to make myself into a spiteful and brazen person like that guy was. Psalm 47:1 NKJV say, " Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!" Instead of being filled with discontent, be pleased with life and be satisfied. It says in Isaiah 9:3 NKJV, " You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; they rejoice before You." Rejoice

and be glad the Bible says. "This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it;" Psalms 118:24 NKJV. I thank God every day for another day.

Rest in God; protect your mind and heart. Do what God says, believe what God tells us to do, and trust in God. That negative cynical person that I knew could have stolen the peace and joy from my life. Why let anyone or anything do that to us?

Psalm 40:4-5 NKJV

"Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust, and does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done; and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."

Do not stay in the congregation of darkness. They are not looking out for your best interests.

What is a congregation of darkness?

People who don't value the Bible; they value their own ideas over what the Bible teaches.

Proverbs 2:10-15 NKJV

"When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths."

Those who don't keep God's commandments.

Proverbs 10:29 NKJV

"The way of the LORD is strength for the upright, but destruction will come to the workers of iniquity."

Proverbs 7:1-3 NKJV

"Keep my words, and treasure my commands within you. Keep my commands and live, and my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart."

Opinionated self-willed people.

Proverbs 16:27-29 NKJV

"An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends. A violent man entices his neighbor, and leads him in a way that is not good."

Those who more interested in keeping man-made laws.

Isaiah 29:13 NKJV

"Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men."

Matthew 15:9 NKJV

"And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Perhaps you know some people like them. Watch out for them. Instead, allow the peace and blessing of the Holy Spirit in your life. When I first heard about the Holy Spirit, I was skeptical. I

thought that I could make up what people are coming up with, but that's not true. God's knows everything and He knows everything that's going on. One time I got a word from God that a young lady's life had been turned upside down. I didn't know anything about her. She told me that she had just broken up with her boyfriend and that she could barely get through the day. God just wanted her to know that He knew what she was going through. Perhaps that word helped her to make it through all she had to do.

My friend told me this story about when he went over to these people's house and the guy didn't believe in God. He told the man the story of his life (that God had given him) and the man said that pretty much sums up his life. My friend didn't know him at all. God did that to let the man know that there is an all-knowing God. I could tell you a lot of stories; it's really amazing all the things that I've seen God do. I had a friend of mine who prayed for a blind man and the man's sight was restored almost instantaneously. I had another friend pray for a woman's hearing to be restored. She had never heard the voices of her husband and children. It was raining that night and she could hear the raindrops falling. There are perhaps thousands of stories occurring every day as people seek God. He is not far from us.

Romans 15:13 NKJV says, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Perhaps you've never seen God at work or the Holy Spirit at work, but He is there. Seek God and His Holy Spirit. "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us;" Romans 5:5 NKJV. God wants us to experience Him and be encouraged and blessed.

There are many sound applicable commandments that come from the Old Testament. Yeshua (Jesus) and Shaul (Paul) taught from the Old Testament and used it as doctrine. We have a good God who wants us to have peace and joy. We have so much to be thankful for as believers in the true God. God can give us peace and keep our hearts and minds in Him. Don't let your mind be overcome with worldly thoughts. Those in darkness are far from God and don't care about doing what is right and good. Instead, stay close to God and seek Him and be blessed.