

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5778 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

May 5th – 10:30 AM Lolo Community "Synagogue"

12:30 PM, Oneg Shabbat

"Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless; who live by the Torah of Adonai. Blessed are those who observe His instruction; who seek Him with all their heart." Psalm

119



"When you enter the land..and reap its harvest..you shall bring in..the first fruits...." Leviticus 23:10

Parsha Emor ("Say") - Leviticus 21 - 24

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה

Va-yomer Adonai el-Moshe

And the Lord said to Moses,

אָמַר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לֹנֵשׁ לֹא־יִטְמָא בְּעַמּוּי:

emor el-ha-kohanim b'nei Aharon v'amarta alehem l'nefesh lo-yitama b'amav.

"Say to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, "For a (dead) soul, he will not make

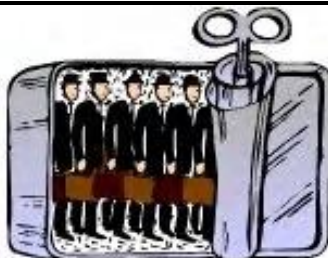
himself unclean among his people.

כִּי אִם־לְשָׂאָרוֹ הַקָּרֹב אֵלָיו לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ וּלְבָתּוֹ וּלְאָחִיו:

Ki im-lish'ero ha-karov elav l'imo ul'aviv v'livno ul'vito ul'achiv.

except for his relatives, who are nearest to him; his mother, and his father, and his son, and his daughter, and his brother....."

Sanctification Laws for the Priests



Prague Clock Tower – Angel of Death strikes the bell -- Counting the time



Death has not been banished from our world. Its inevitability has not abated. But its impression upon us is far different than it was for our ancestors of a few centuries ago. There is almost a casualness regarding it in our modern society. Judaism never glorified death, never saw it as an eagerly anticipated portal and passage to a better world. Our mission is in the here and now, to toil and to struggle to fulfill God's standards of behavior in this physical world, in order to make this world a more pleasant and a more perfect place, pointing the way to a future with God. The Jew embraces life. Therefore those who were meant to be totally consecrated to God were to avoid death like the plague. This was such a contrast to so many ancient polytheistic cultures in which one of the primary functions of the priests was to preside over elaborate funeral ceremonies and to minister to the dead. Our priests (kohanim) on the other hand, never had anything to do with funeral arrangements. They ministered to life and not to death. For a long period of time in Jewish history, communities and synagogues were reluctant to hire as their rabbi someone who was a kohein, since he would be unable to officiate at funerals.

In the Torah portion, Emor, God paints a picture for us concerning the sanctification (the setting apart) of His priests and their complete dedication to Him, as they lead, participate, and maintain Tabernacle worship. For Tabernacle worship, God chose the sons of Aaron, the kohanim, to serve Him by mediating the sacrificial system for themselves and for the people. God's priests were the ones He chose and exclusively set apart for the purpose of cleansing sinful men, so they could fellowship with their Holy God. The picture of the sanctification laws for the priests represents, even for us today, that God holds those who teach and lead His people in worship to a higher standard than others, who know Him as their God. And as believer/priests, God holds all of His people to a

higher standard than all other people. It has always been God's people that held the light of life and brought God's gospel message to the "gentile," pagan nations. Tabernacle worship illustrated for the surrounding people groups that the God of the Hebrews was alive in the lives of the Hebrew community. There have always been those gentiles, who in faith, joined themselves to the God of Israel and fully participated in Jewish community life. All of God's people, who have put their faith in the blood sacrifice of Yeshua, are required to live sanctified lives, according to God's standards. We are required to be holy for our God is holy. By leading holy lives, we "prove" the worthiness of our faith and the worthiness of the God we serve to all those who observe us.

Moedim



In this Torah portion, God expands His rules for how His people should approach Him on specific **moedim** (appointed times): the Sabbath (Shabbat); Passover (Pesach); Shavuot (Pentecost - the Feast of Weeks); the Day of the Blowing of Trumpets (Rosh Hashana); the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur); Sukkot (The Feast of Booths - Tabernacles). God provides the Levites some of His rules for Tabernacle maintenance and also mentions some of the consequences for defying God's rules for daily living.

Complete Dedication To God's Service - Chapter 21



Aleinu

It's our Duty

In **Chapter 21**, we can observe the picture of the complete dedication of God's priests to His service. When they have been consecrated and have begun to serve, they are allowed few distractions. They must maintain lives of purity and obedience and have a willingness to "give their all." ... just like God's people today.

The priests, who brought God's light into the hearts of His people, could not "defile" themselves in ways that would diminish the position, which God had entrusted to them because they represented God to the people. From Leviticus 11:24-25, 32, 35, all of God's people were told to avoid dead bodies of animals. The priests, who were held to a higher standard of observable holiness than the rest of the people, were not allowed to come into contact with dead people, except for their nearest relatives. The High Priest, who once a year entered directly into God's presence, was not allowed to attend funerals for anyone. Openly exhibiting observable signs of mourning would diminish the hope that only God could bring and make common their position before the people. Even today at funerals,

we grieve for the loss of our friends and relatives, but at the same time, we rejoice that they are with God, and we will surely see them again. Our demeanor should not be observed to be like those without hope, but should reflect the hope of God within us. Priests were not allowed to profane (literally, "pollute") themselves through marriage to Canaanites. Today, we should not consider marriage with non-believers and thereby "pollute" ourselves. Priests were not allowed to shave their heads bald or shave the corners of their beards. They were not allowed to make cuts in their bodies. These were Canaanite worship practices. God's priests should endeavor to show themselves observably different from the heathen. They were not allowed to "pollute" themselves by marrying harlots or divorced wives. Others of God's people could do so, but the priests were held to a higher standard. The serving (anointed with oil for service) High Priest was held to an even higher standard. He could only marry a virgin from his people. One of his descendants would become the next High Priest and therefore, must not be "polluted." As God's representative before the people, the High Priest was held to the highest standard of holiness....not for his own sake, but to reflect for the people the holiness of God. Just as the animal that was brought for an offering to God had to be completely whole, without defect -- giving one's best to God, so also the priest who brought the offering to God's altar must be whole, without defect. Today we might say that believers in Messiah should be a reflection of His holiness, avoiding worldly pollution, which would serve as a distraction from our complete dedication to serve God. It would also be a negative reflection of God to the people, who should see the holiness of God reflected in His believer/priests.

Respect for the Sustenance Provided by God - Chapter 22



God provided for the sustenance of His priests through the offerings of His people....both in the days of Moses and also today. The prescribed portions of the offerings to God were to be consumed by the priests. The priests were to show due respect for the provision of God by adhering to God's regulations concerning what parts could be eaten and by whom. Their observable respect for their food provided by God was a direct reflection of their respect for God. Therefore defiance of God's rules by His appointed leaders had severe consequences. No one who was "unclean" could partake of the God-provided sustenance. God sustained the priests and their families with holy food. However, no one "outside the family" could partake; not the layman (non-priest); not the sojourner (only a temporary resident or tenant); not the hired man (a day laborer, who would receive his proper wages); nor even a daughter, a former family member, who has left "the family." Only "family members," who reside within the protection of "the family" could partake.

"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep" **(1 Corinthians 27-30)**.

Today this principle is clearly observable. God provides all the physical and spiritual sustenance necessary for His believer/priests; His "family." Yet, they must come before Him "clean," according to His rules to partake. Attempting to partake unworthily still has severe consequences. Today the world is waiting to see whether those, who call themselves God's people, will be observably different..... "clean."

"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' says the Lord Almighty" **(2 Corinthians 6:14 - 18)**.

Chapter 22 closes with several laws concerning offerings, having a common theme. Just as the priest, who presented offerings to God must be whole, so also the offerings, themselves, must be whole; without defects. The worshiper must bring only his best for the Lord.

Thought Question - Family Members

One might think that all the people inhabiting our planet would want to become "family members." The rewards are so great; the consequences so severe. Since everyone is eligible to come into God's family, why do so few decide to do so? Hint: think about the rules and responsibilities of "family membership" stated above.



Chapter 23 lists certain festivals that God expected His people to observe. These are "**moedim**," fixed or appointed times that God expected His people to observe by coming together to worship Him at the place, where He dwelled with His people. With one exception, First Fruits, all of these festivals to God are practiced on a fixed date in the Jewish calendar. There is a cessation of regular work and a gathering (a holy convocation) of God's people for worship. In this chapter, we are given the calendar order of these festivals. Notice that they are divided into two sequences: Spring festivals and Fall festivals. Notice also that the Sabbath is mentioned first, as one of God's "holy callings." Further expansion regarding these festival is found throughout the Torah, especially in Numbers, Chapters 28 & 29. This Shabbat, we will discuss each of these appointed times. Be prepared to discuss whether we should observe these festivals today and how differently, if at all, should we observe them. **Thought Question:** Ask yourself why the Church celebrates two holidays, Christmas and Easter, which are Church traditions but not God's appointed times, while failing to celebrate His appointed times, as God commanded.

The gathering of God's community to celebrate and worship at these appointed times refreshed and revived God's people. Much of the **B'rit Hadasha** (New Testament) was written in the context of these festivals. Therefore to fully understand the renewed covenant of Messiah, one must understand the cultural background of these festivals.

Chapter 24 discusses the oil used in the lampstand in the tabernacle, the showbread used in the tabernacle, and blasphemy. For Shabbat, compare verse 19, ("And if a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him.") with the "Lex Talionis," the law of retribution ("the punishment must fit the crime," rather than be the actual equivalent of the crime). How is God's law a step forward? Compare **Leviticus 24:19** to **Matthew 5:38**: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'. But I say unto you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also." What do you think is meant in Matthew 5:38? Lastly, notice in verse 22, that others besides Jews are included under the laws for God's people. Notice that there is only one standard for God's people, and there are no "second-class citizens."

SHABBAT SHALOM

