

אֵמֹר

EMOR/SPEAK

Vayikra/Leviticus 21:1-24:23

Our **topics** in **Vayikra** have consistently centered around the **priesthood**, **sacrifices**, **holiness**, **defilement**, etc. In like manner, parasha **Emor** (אֵמֹר) begins with **instructions for the priests** in order that they might remain **qualified for the priesthood**, and then a detailed list of **physical deformities** that would **keep them from serving** in the **sanctuary**. **Chapter 22** begins with a discussion of how the **sanctified food** is to be **consumed** and ends with another detailed list of **deformities** that would **prohibit an animal** from being **acceptable as a sacrifice**. All of these subjects seem to be **typical** for **Vayikra**. Suddenly, however, in **chapter 23**, we switch subjects completely and find ourselves in the most comprehensive discussion of the **various holidays** in all of Torah. **Why** has the Torah chosen to **discuss the feasts amidst information on priests, sacrifices, holiness, etc?**

Vayikra 23:1 And יְהוָה spoke to Moshe, saying,² "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: The feasts (moadai - מוֹעֲדֵי) of יְהוָה, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations (mikraei kodesh - מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ), these are My feasts (moadai - מוֹעֲדֵי).

Concerning the **feasts**, **verse 2** contains **two words** that are **very familiar** to us. The word for “**feast**”, (**moed** - מוֹעֵד), and the word translated as “**holy**”, (**kodesh** - קֹדֶשׁ) are also **linked together** when speaking of the **Tabernacle** (all underlined words are related forms of these two words):

Shemot/Exodus 29:42 "This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the Tabernacle of meeting (moed - מוֹעֵד) before יְהוָה, where I will meet you to speak with you.⁴³ "And there I will meet (v'noadi - וְנִקְדְּתִי) with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified (v'nikdash - וְנִקְדַּשׁ) by My glory.⁴⁴ "So I will consecrate (v'kidashiti - וְקִדַּשְׁתִּי) the tabernacle of meeting (moed - מוֹעֵד) and the altar. I will also consecrate (akadesh - אִקְדַּשׁ) both Aharon and his sons to minister to Me as priests.⁴⁵ "I will dwell (v'shakhanti - וְשָׁכַנְתִּי) among the children of Israel and will be their Elohim.

Through these **two words**, we are able to understand the **connection** between the **Tabernacle** and the **feasts** - we know that יְהוָה's **Presence** was meant to **dwell** in the **Tabernacle**. The **Tabernacle** was a “**place**” where man was able to **meet** and **establish a closer relationship** with the **Almighty**. It was an **opportunity** for him to **grow closer** through **fellowship** with his **Elohim** and with **all of Israel**.

Now taking another look at the **Hebrew above**, we notice that the **same word** translated as “**feast**” (**moed** - מוֹעֵד) in **Vayikra**, is also translated as “**meeting**” (**moed** - מוֹעֵד), in **Shemot 29**. What the **Torah** is trying to tell us, is that this “**meeting**” (**moed** - מוֹעֵד) with יְהוָה takes place not just in the **fixed space of the Tabernacle** (Shemot 29:44), but also in the **fixed time of the “feasts”** (**moed** - מוֹעֵד).

So getting back to our **question** about **why this section** on the **feasts** is **placed** in this particular spot in **Vayikra**, we understand now that **amidst the other instructions for holiness in the sacrifices**, our **obedience in the keeping of the feasts** is referred to as “**callings of holiness**”:

Vayikra 23:4 ' These are the feasts (moadai - מועדי) of יהוה, the callings (miqra'ai - מיקראי) of holiness (kodesh - קדש) which you shall proclaim at their appointed times (moedim - מועדים).

We know that **each feast** is filled with **Messianic expectation/foreshadowing**. They were intended to be **lived out** in order to perfectly picture the **work of the Messiah**. **Traditions** and **customs** can often **interfere** with יהוה's perfect plans. For decades **seminary students** have been **taught** that these **feasts** (moedim - מועדים) are only “**shadows**” of **Yeshua** and that they **no longer** should be **practiced**. Unfortunately, they have been **replaced** with **man-made holidays**. Our **substitution** has brought a **loss** in the **holiness** intended to be **obtained by keeping all of His commandments, including the feasts**:

Vayikra 22:31 " Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and perform them: I am יהוה. ³² "You shall not profane My holy Name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I am יהוה who makes you holy, ³³ "who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your Elohim: I am יהוה."

Chapter 24 brings us to another **slight interruption** in the listing of the **commandments**, as we read the **historical narrative** of the **blasphemer**:

Vayikra 24:10 Now the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel; and this Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel fought each other in the camp. ¹¹ And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name and cursed; and so they brought him to Moshe. (His mother's name was Shelomith the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.) ¹² Then they put him in custody, that the mind of יהוה might be shown to them.

Again we ask the question...**why is this story placed specifically here** in the **Torah**? It appears that this story is about **blaspheming the Name** of יהוה and **cursing**:

Vayikra 24:13 And יהוה spoke to Moshe, saying, ¹⁴ "Take outside the camp him who has cursed; then let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him. ¹⁵ "Then you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'Whoever curses his Elohim shall bear his sin. ¹⁶ 'And whoever blasphemes the Name of יהוה shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the Name, he shall be put to death.

Now suddenly, the **Torah** will take **another sharp turn**. Before finishing the story of the blasphemer, it will present the **laws for one who kills or injures**:

Vayikra 24:17 ' Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death. ¹⁸ 'Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, animal for animal. ¹⁹ 'If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done,

so shall it be done to him --²⁰ 'fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him.²¹ 'And whoever kills an animal shall restore it; but whoever kills a man shall be put to death.²² 'You shall have the same law for the stranger and for one from your own country; for I am אלהים your Elohim.' "

After this, **Torah ends** the story of the **blasphemer**:

Vayikra 24:23 Then Moshe spoke to the children of Israel; and they took outside the camp him who had cursed, and stoned him with stones. So the children of Israel did as אלהים commanded Moshe.

The sages teach that the **real story** of the **blasphemer** started **well before he cursed the Almighty**. What seems to be emphasized in these verses is the **heritage** of the **blasphemer**. **Verse 10** points out that he is *“the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian”*. Perhaps a **heated argument** started because of **money matters**, which led to the parties **physically fighting**. For this reason the **laws of civil damages** and the **laws of injuries** are included in the **midst of the story** (24:17-22). However, in addition to the physical damages, **something else happens**. The son of the **Egyptian man blasphemes the Name and curses**.

What does it mean to **blaspheme the Name and curse**? It is certainly far more than **using the Name of the Almighty as a curse when shouting out in anger**. **Name** (shem - שם) represents the **authority** and the **purposes of the Creator**. This **perspective** is seen in a **clearly Messianic verse** concerning **Solomon, son of David**:

1 Chronicles 22:10 'He shall build a house for My Name, and he shall be My son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.'

A verse in **Revelation** also points to **His authority** and **His support** for those who **acknowledge His Name**:

Revelation 3:8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My Name."

Now you can probably understand the **futility** of some who attempt to **“say” the name “יהוה”** with their **mouths** as a **magic formula** for having their **prayers answered**:

John 16:23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My Name He will give you."

If we ask for something in the **Father’s “Name”**, then we would be **agreeing with His authority and His will**. This is further supported by the **next verse in John** as **Yeshua** explains to them that **“until now”** they have had **no understanding of His authority and His will**:

John 16:24 "Until now you have asked nothing in My Name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

Another verse in **John** teaches us that the **Holy Spirit** was sent “**in My Name**”, that is, **in His authority** and **according to His will**:

*John 14:26 "But the Helper, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

Okay, let's **relate** all this to the **blasphemer**....the **Torah** seems to **connect** the fact that this **man was the son of an Egyptian man with** the fact that he **blasphemed** (or rejected) **the Name** (authority). Apparently it was because of his **mixed lineage** that the **Israelites did not know what to do with him**. For this reason, **Elohim** seems to **emphasize** that the **death penalty for blaspheming applies to ANY person dwelling in the Israelite camp, native or sojourner**:

Vayikra 24:16 'And whoever blasphemes the Name of יהוה shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the sojourner as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the Name of יהוה, he shall be put to death.

This story is **similar** to that of the “**gatherer of wood**”:

Bemidbar/Numbers 15:32 Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day.³³ And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moshe and Aharon, and to all the congregation.³⁴ They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him.³⁵ Then יהוה said to Moshe, "The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp."³⁶ So, as יהוה commanded Moshe, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

It does not mention that this man **blasphemed “the Name”**, but it does indicate that **he challenged יהוה's authority and His will for the Sabbath**, with the **consequence of death by stoning**. What we see in **both stories** is that **those who intentionally blaspheme the Name, or the authority**, which is the **instructions of Torah**; whether he is an **Israelite or sojourner**, he will be put to **death**.

Now I'm just wondering if this story has anything to do with the verse in **Matthew** which speaks of the **unforgivable sin**:

Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.³¹ " Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.³² "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

The **Holy Spirit** was **given** in “**His Name**” (John 14:26), and it was for the **purpose of explaining truth** and **enabling the believer to keep the Torah**. Do you think “**blaspheming the Name**” could be the **intentional rejection of His authority**? By **rejecting His authority**, is one **rejecting “His holiness”**? **Without holiness, one will never see the Almighty, including the Messiah**. That thought comes from the book of **Hebrews**, but there is **even more** there:

Hebrews 12:5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of יהוה, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;"⁶ For whom יהוה loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."⁷ If you endure chastening, Elohim deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.¹² Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.¹⁴ Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see Adonai

Did you catch how יהוה chastened? Although I believe it was **spiritual**, it is compared to **physical deformities**. That takes us right back to our **parasha in Vayikra**! A few weeks ago we discussed the **ailment of tsara'at** as a **result of the speaking of inappropriate words**. It was a very serious ailment and **required being put out of the camp**. Now we are again made aware of **physical ailments** within the camp. Could they possibly also have been **brought on by certain sins**? Is this why these men were **prohibited from participating in Tabernacle services**?

Just as **tsara'at** is **not seen today**, I do not believe that people's **physical abnormalities** are **symptoms of their sins**. Rather they are the **result of the sinful world** that we **live in**. The stories of **Torah**, however, point to a **time** when יהוה's **people were united** and **discipline** was made in a **visible way**. **Today** we can become **spiritually disabled**. **Hebrews 12:14** gives the **prescription for our ailment** – "**pursue peace with all people, and holiness**". I believe that once a **more unified Israel** pursues **spiritual holiness**, **physical healings** will become much more **prevalent**. The **complete restoration** of all things includes **wholeness, body and spirit**.

Holiness seems to be the **key** everywhere we turn in **Vayikra**. To turn one's back on **holiness** and **blaspheme the Name** and the **authority of יהוה** meant **instead of being a living stone** in a house built for יהוה (1 Peter 2:5), you may find yourself **underneath a heap of stones**...a picture of a house, destroyed.

For years we have **ignored Vayikra**, the book of **holiness**. Now that it's **back in our midst**, it's up to us to make the **choice for holiness**!

Romans 6:22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of Elohim, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Shabbat Shalom!

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