

Introduction to Parsha #31: Emor¹

READINGS: ***Torah Emor:*** **Leviticus 21:1-24:44**
 Haftarah: **Ezekiel 44:15-31**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Peter 2:4-10**



Speak to the kohanim, the sons of Aharon
[Leviticus 21:1]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition No. 3, *S'lach* [the Petition for Forgiveness]

***Vayomer Adonai el-Moshe* - Then the Holy One said to Moshe ... *emor el-ha-kohanim b'nei Aharon* – declare to Aharon's sons, the 'priests' Leviticus 21:1a.**

The Holy One doesn't want us just to 'think ourselves holy' because we ascribe to certain doctrines, can recite a certain creed on cue, or enjoy membership status in this or that tax exempt organization. He wants to make us *holy from stem to stern*. He wants us to actually become *kedoshim* – i.e. carriers and vessels of *kedusha* – and to function in that role 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. He doesn't want to just teach us how make nice for a few moments in front of a room full of equally superficial people – He actually wants to make us *holy to the core, so that we radiate Heavenly kedusha energy from the inside out*. He wants us to become and behave holy - and to do it in every room of the house, every booth of the marketplace, and in every break room, lunchroom, conference room, or workstation of our workplace. He wants every aspect of lives to radiate holiness. He therefore wants to bring holiness into and inspire us to perfect holiness in our thought-life, our worldview, our mood and attitude matrix, our priorities, our bodily appetites and urges, our affections, our emotions, our narratives, our topics of speech, our vocabulary, our appearance, our body language, our conduct, our social interactions, our business transactions, our personal relationships, our reactions to everything from stress to trauma to wrongdoing to injustice and to persecution. He wants us to impact the world with and through holiness – and then

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leave the dust of holiness behind as a legacy.

Whew! In short, our Creator/King intends us to be holy as, like, in the same manner, to the same measure, for the same purpose, and with the same effect that He Himself is holy. Once each year, on *Yom Kippur*, He intends to refresh this holiness focus by bringing each of us to the point of completely dying to self-will and self-interest. And He intends to measure our level of holiness-maturation by the quality of our love for our fellow man. He wants us to understand that carrying His *Kedusha* requires radical fruit-bearing. What is to be the fruit of our *Kedusha*/holiness? We are to love and honor the people He brings into our spheres of influence – from father and mother to neighbor to foreigner to enemy – in the same way, to the same length, height, depth, and breadth that He loves us. The proof of whether we are actually becoming holy as He is holy, you see, is whether we are starting to love and serve people – even those who don't deserve it - like He loves and serves us – even when we don't deserve it.

What ramifications will this radical Makeover the Holy One has in mind for us have in our daily lives? How will the new focus on becoming *Kadosh L'Adonai* – *i.e.* completely set apart and consecrated exclusively unto the service of the Holy One - affect our daily lives? How will it change our self-talk and meditations? How will it affect our personalities? How will it upgrade – or limit - our conversations? How will it restructure our priorities? How will it impact our protocols of time management, money and possession stewardship, energy-utilization, creativity-deployment, and influence-stewardship? How will it affect our diet, our physical appearance and presentation? How will it change the way we react to personal insults and offenses, to cultural/ethnic slights, to real or seeming injustices, to unpopular and/or oppressive governmental policies, to blatant immorality, to betrayals and to bereavements? How will it alter the way we respond to hatemongering, to fearmongering, to class-envy baiting, to gender-war inciting, to sarcasm-spewing, to slogan-chanting, to virtue-signaling, to narrative-framing, and to culture-canceling? In *Emor* the Holy One is going to lay out strategies – and give instructions regarding sequence and timing – relative to the makeover He has in mind for us. So *open our eyes, O Holy One, that we may see wondrous things in your Torah.*

Setting the Scene for the Parsha of Prophetic Messages

Return with me, if you will, to Sinai. Imagine we are in the month of Nisan/Aviv, in the first year after the Exodus. The turtledove is coo-ing, announcing that the sweet season of spring is upon us. The desert floor has burst into glorious bloom. And as it is in *the natural* so it is in *the spiritual*. Our previously dry, weather-beaten souls – our 'deserts within' - have burst into bloom as well. The Manifest

Presence of the Holy One is with us, energizing us, and flooding both our *camp* and our *hearts* with His Marvelous Light. We are basking in Divine love under the Sinaitic *Chuppah*. Manna falls from Heaven for us. Moshe's face is shining. Aharon is exuding humility. His sons Elazar and Itamar are humbly serving, modeling what it looks like for human beings to wear the holiness of our King like a garment, and to therefore love, honor, and serve all people unselfishly - no matter how unlovable they may be. Manna is falling from Heaven, morning by morning. Living water pours forth in great torrents from a supernatural Rock. No one is self-promoting. No one is selling snake-oil. No one is spreading propaganda. Not a single argument over politics, ideology, philosophy, pseudo-science, ethnic superiority, or morality has broken out in our camp in months. No one is speaking lashon hara. No one is outraged. No one is offended. No one is nursing either hurt feelings or a grudge. Hosting the Presence of the Holy One is the exclusive focus, and doing His Will by bringing His Kingdom to bear on earth as it operates in Heaven is the sole and only agenda. make no mistake, Beloved - this is not a pleasant still-shot capturing a nostalgic memory from our idyllic past; it is, instead, a full, panoramic motion picture of our glorious future! What it provides is the prototype for the Messianic Kingdom to come - *i.e.* Messiah's millennial reign on the earth. *Selah!*

Our Bridegroom-King brought us to His great spiritual banqueting table at Sinai - and He will one day do it again. His amazing, transforming Love will *envelop* and *surround* us like a great banner, marking us as His *Garden Enclosed*, His sealed *fountain of delight*. We will, once again, delight to sit in our Bridegroom's shade. Just as, at Sinai, every day Moshe called us together to release some stunning new revelation over us - and we were faint with love - one day Messiah will do all this and more!

Meanwhile, back at the Mountain of the King we have just completed a crash course on the '*weightier things*' of Torah. The Holy One is defining for us in real life terms both what it means *to be holy as He is holy* and *to love everyone from our neighbor to the foreigner*. We are learning to think like the Creator of the Universe thinks. We are learning what He sees in and desires for and from us. We are learning what it takes to become the kind of covenant partner He deserves, expects, and is patiently helping us blossom into. Suddenly our hearts are astir. Suddenly we are gripped by a sense of individual and collective destiny. The deep wounds we incurred in the bondage of our former lives are beginning to heal. The thick darkness that engulfed us in Egypt is slowly releasing its grip upon our souls. The *Ultimate Extreme Make-Over* through which our Divine Bridegroom has designed to transform us from a rag-tag mob of refugees into a BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE - a people who function as His pure, radiant Bride - is in full swing.

And the Greatest Discourse of Torah – the *Kedusha*² Discourse that began in Leviticus 11 – is building up to its dramatic conclusion. But the Holy One still has a lot to say before the Holy One's '*This is What Holiness Is and What Love Looks Like in My Kingdom*' Download comes to a close.

Behold - The Voice of the Bridegroom!

Transliterated from the original Hebrew text the opening phrase of this week's parsha reads as follows: ***Vayomer Adonai ...*** [*i.e. And then the Holy One spoke...*] Please take note Who is speaking. Please note the *source* of every one of the prophetic messages we are about to receive. The *Voice is that of none other than the Beautiful Voice of our Divine Bridegroom!* With Sh'lomo [Solomon] we should all exclaim:

***The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes - leaping upon the mountains,
skipping upon the hills!
[Song of Songs 2:8]***

The Glorious One Whom our soul loves is speaking prophetically, creatively and lovingly over us again. *Sh'ma Yisrael!* He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Understand, however, that the things the Holy One authorizes Moshe to 'speak' are *not ordinary 'words'*. They are not pithy *tidbits of information*. The words that we are going to be reading are words spoken *by the Holy One* Himself, and which therefore are *power packed with creative, transformative impetus*. They are not mere 'ceremonial laws' for a bygone era. In fact, they are not '*laws*' in the Western sense at all. They are timeless wisdom – the kind of wisdom that helps avoid and overcome not only ignorance and superstition but also folly, indoctrination (of every kind, including cultural, ethnic, generational, national, ideological, and institutional), and arrogance. They are revelation - full of Heaven-sourced energy to inspire. They are the lamp that guides our feet and a light-source that illumines our path. They are practical instructions given by a Master Craftsman to a group of dearly beloved apprentices. empowerments. The theme of the parsha is, therefore, '*prophetic messages*' – *i.e.* messages that carry the weight of the glory of the Holy One's Persona and Personality.

The first Biblical usage of the verb root of the word *emor*³ was in Genesis 1:3. There, we are told: ***And the Holy One said*** [*i.e. emor*] ***Yehi-ohr!*** [Light, **BE!**] ***... and light was.*** The Holy One's words *cause light to burst forth out of darkness* and

²*Kedusha* is a Hebrew word oft-times translated into English as 'holiness'. It refers to the special covenant-based form of Heaven-sourced energy, inspiration, and empowerment that the Holy One releases into those closest to Him to enable them both to testify credibly of His Redemption and model His beautiful attributes to the world.

³ Amar is *alef, mem, resh*. Strong's Hebrew word #559, it is pronounced *aw-mar'*.

infuse life into dead matter. None of them return to Him “void” – without accomplishing the task for which He released them into His Creation. Our Divine Bridegroom’s words have POWER in them. They *make things happen*. Like SEEDS, words spoken by the Holy One are infused with a LIFE FORCE – a life force that always brings forth *a harvest after its own nature*. The Holy One’s words always raise those who *sh’ma* them - *i.e. those who hear, receive, internalize and incubate them* - up to another spiritual level. The Holy One speaks to human beings in order to release *power and life* into and over them. As the Psalmist said: ***The entrance of Your Word brings light and understanding to the simple.*** Psalm 119:130.

Oh, My King ... may it be done unto Your servants according to Your Will!

Light Brings Perspective, Inspiration, and Empowerment

Divine speech – i.e. the creative, prophetic words of our Divine Bridegroom’s mouth – is the power source that brought about the Universe as we know it. As Yochanan [John] says: ***All things were made through Him*** [*i.e. Greek Logos, Hebrew Dabar*], ***and without Him nothing was made that was made.*** John 1:3. Yochanan goes on to say: ***In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*** John 1:4. What is the primary purpose of light? Its primary function is to bring **PERSPECTIVE** – i.e. to illumine all around so one can see context and obtain an understanding of how the subject under consideration relates to its surroundings. Perspective is defined as *the ability to perceive things in their actual interrelations and/or comparative importance*. Light gives one the ability to see not only what something looks like, but where it came from, how it presently fits into its surroundings, and what effect it is having – or could/should have - on its environment.

It is the same with the prophetic declarations issued by the Holy One and His Earthly Ambassadors. Such ‘words’ bring *perspective* to the important issues of life – and how those important issues apply to and affect our current situation. Once perspective begins to sink in, the appropriate next phase is *inspiration*. A sense of having a *mission* and a *destiny* begins to grow. Issues and situations of life begin to get processed through a spiritual filter of *how does this fit into my ‘mission’ and ‘destiny’* instead of the usual flesh-driven filter of *how do I avoid as much pain as possible and experience as much comfort/pleasure as possible*. As the perspective we receive through prophetic declarations begins to take effect we become *inspired to overcome obstacles and situations - and maximize the growth potential we suddenly can see lying within those things* - instead of succumbing to negative emotions. We recognize how totally unnecessary and counter-productive reacting to our situation with offense, frustration, anger, bitterness, fear, woundedness, anxiety and overwhelm would be.

Perspective and *inspiration* then lead us to the point of *energization* and *empowerment*. Once we can visualize overcoming the obstacle or situation, and actually embracing it as a springboard to a higher level of intimacy with the Holy One, we become empowered to take on the challenge and cooperate and co-labor with the Divine Bridegroom to make our vision of overcoming a tangible reality. We are then able to approach the situation we are in with peace, confidence, patience, humility, wisdom, longsuffering, and with ... yes, even with a level of *joy*.

Getting an Empowered Perspective on the Hebrew Verb Emor

Whenever the Holy One speaks to anyone – or has one of His Kingdom Ambassadors speak to anyone - it is never just to *inform* or to *educate* the hearer. Instead, the purpose of Divine Communication is to energize, activate, and elevate - by bringing light, perspective, inspiration and empowerment. Put another way, the goal of all Divine Communication is to transition/elevate/graduate the hearer from one spiritual level to another. In some cases the transition called for is a transition from the realm of *darkness to the realm of Light*. In other cases it is a transition from the realm of *chaos to the realm of Divine Order*. In still other cases the purpose of Divine Communication is to empower the hearer[s] to transition from entrapment in the *tamei* realm to the freedom and fullness of the *tahor* realm, or to transition from the *chol* realm to the *kadosh* realm. In all cases however, the purpose of the Holy One's speech is to enable the hearer[s] to transition from a *less-than fully purposeful existence to a deeper level of destiny fulfilling living*⁴.

Understand, therefore, as we embark on this study, that the Hebrew word “*Emor*” with which our parsha begins means much more than just to repeat words in sequence. In Torah context *Emor* means:

- *to deliver a message from a superior;*
- *to prophesy;*
- *to passionately declare wisdom and/or revelation;*
- *to clearly announce a decree; and*
- *to release a life-giving force over someone, in order to raise them from one spiritual level to another.*

Let's take a moment to compare that with the Hebrew word picture behind *emor*. The verb *emor* is made up of the letters *alef*, *mem*, and *resh*. *Alef* is a pictograph representing *that which precedes everything else — i.e. the Creative Word of Elohim*. The second letter, *mem*, is a pictograph representing a *cresting wave*, signifying *that something [i.e. whatever precedes it in the pictographic mural] is flowing*,

⁴ This, of course, follows the pattern of Genesis 1:3.

moving, and being shed abroad – like a wave reaching lapping up on the shore. The final letter, resh, is a pictograph representing a king or head of a household having stepped down or away from his throne or seat of authority to become personal and accessible. The pictographic mural made up of the Hebrew letters alef, mem, and resh thus shows us the image of the Word of the Holy One being shed abroad through the personal actions and behaviors engaged in by the king's emissaries and diplomats.

The Transformation is Radical – and So, So Worth It!

As we learned last week in our studies, the empowerment the Holy One provides to us through the medium of Divine Communication is primarily to do two things – i.e. to *become holy as He is holy* [to merge our priorities, characteristics, attributes, personality traits, and behavior patterns into His] and to *actually begin to love both our neighbor and the stranger in our midst as we love ourselves* [the way He loves them]! We can overcome offense! We can transcend personality conflicts. We can rise above policy disagreements. We can put off covetousness, and jealousy, envy, anger, and malice – and put on patience, gentleness, kindness, wisdom, and love. We can bear good fruit. We can be a blessing to every family on the face of the earth. We can teach our household to walk in the way of the Holy One – modeling Kingdom-quality righteousness and Heavenly Court-informed judgment for whoever we meet. It will not happen all at once. There will be fits and starts – successes and failures along the way. It will take humility. It will take discipline. It will take time. But if we do not bail out on the process, and abort the Holy life-force we are carrying, it *will happen*. We have the Holy One's Word – even better, His Covenant Commitment – on it. He will do His part faithfully, day in and day out; the question is, are we willing to do ours?

A Parsha Emor Travelogue

Sometimes our Bridegroom-King speaks to us in *straightforward words of instruction for living*. Other time He chooses to *paint beautiful prophetic pictures for us* which are designed to cause us to respond with awe and inspired wonder and motivate us to *seek out deeper levels of Divine Truth through intensely. focused meditation and prayer*. This week the Holy One is going to combine these two approaches and *use words to paint prophetic pictures*. Do you want to know why He is doing this?

Last week in *Kedoshim* the Holy One prophetically empowered us to ***be holy as He is holy***. He then shocked many of us by defining the holiness He was birthing in us in some very practical terms including:

1. *reverence for and submission to Him and His ways;*
2. *showing respect to and honoring the parents and elders He has*

placed in our lives;

3. *treasuring, cherishing and guarding His Sabbaths;*
4. *loving our fellow men proactively and in practical ways the way He loves us; and*
5. *jealously guarding and maintaining our sexuality for its intended contexts, activities, and purposes.*

You might want to read back over that list four or five times before moving on. Ask the Holy One to first *reveal to you* – and *then cleanse you from* - anything in your life and approach to life that is inconsistent with His holiness. Go ahead. Grab a box of tissues. Ask the One Your Soul loves to *search your heart and reveal any uncleanness of attitude or of speech* as well as *any unclean behavior pattern in each of those areas*. Go through them *one by one*. Don't hurry now. Absolutely everything that hinders bridal love must go.

It is time for all our *pleasant distractions* to be released. It is time for all our *competing loyalties* to be forsaken. It is time for *selfish ambitions* to be cast aside – considered as rubbish compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Messiah. It is time for all offenses that we have taken up *against* and *on behalf of* other people to be surrendered. It is time for fear of what men think – or can do to either harm or promote you – to vanish into insignificance in light of the Magnificent Glory of He Who is fairer than the sons of men. It is time to shake yourself free of and walk away from the *tamei* slop of that which leads to death, destruction and fragmentation and bathe in the living waters of that which our Bridegroom has taught us leads to life, health, wholeness and peace.

Please, *take your time*. I will be *more than happy to wait*. I *really will*. Just let me know when you are ready to move on.

Stepping Off Into Deeper Water

In *Emor* the Holy One is planning on taking the definition of holiness He has in mind for His Beloved Bride-to-Be to an even deeper level. Our *comfort levels will be challenged*. Our ill-advised *dalliance with culturally acceptable idols will be exposed* for what it is. It will all start with Aharon and his descendants being given special instructions as to how they – as the Holy One's emissaries and diplomats on earth in the Heavenly embassy we call the '*Mish'kan*' [i.e. the '*Tabernacle*'] - are to become established in an even higher level of holiness than the rest of the populace which was then encamped at Sinai. This is '*the mark of the high calling*'.

Aharon and his sons are about to be called to provide the rest of us with a *prophetic picture* of the kind of whole-hearted dedication that the Bridegroom-

King wants to inspire in us all of His Covenant Partners. The call to ‘model’ holiness at a deeper level will cover several areas of life.

Area #1: Matters of Private Life and Interpersonal Interactions/Relationships

First will come instructions pertaining to the high level of *kedusha* [covenant-based energy designed to empower us model our Bridegroom King’s attributes to the world] that the Holy One’s appointed kingdom diplomats are called to exhibit and model in *matters of everyday life*. Those who have been specially appointed by the Holy One to represent His Kingdom are to show the rest of us how to live in a constant state of awareness of, and maintain care in dealings with, the ‘*tamei*’ aspects of the world in which we live.

The Holy One is going to make it clear that for His specially appointed Kingdom ambassadors the calling to remain in a *tahor* [whole, pure, un-fragmented] state is to apply *even in the context of interactions with family members*. He wants us to know that the home and family are by no means ‘*Torah-free zones*’. He wants them to demonstrate for us that it is possible for the Holy One, not us, to be the king of all our family relationships. And He wants them to model for us how the Torah can be the Constitution pursuant to which all homes in His Kingdom are operated.

Area #2: Matters of Public Life and ‘Ministry’

The Holy One will then proceed to lay out instructions pertaining to matters of public ‘ministry’. The Holy One wants it understood that only those anointed *kohanim* who are ‘*without defect*’ are to be assigned to fulfill the blood service duties in the *Mish’kan*. Some specific ‘blemishes’ that might cause a kingdom diplomat to be temporarily called aside from public ‘ministry’ are listed. These listed ‘blemishes’ are of course *prophetic images* that are designed to make us look at our own souls, to assist us to apply the truths we find written here regarding the *kohanim* to ourselves ON A MUCH DEEPER AND PAINFULLY PERSONAL LEVEL.

Since one of the ways a *kohen* could be temporarily disqualified from participating in the blood service ministry of the *Mish’kan* was contracting *tamei* status, the Holy One will discuss ways in which a *kohen* can become *tamei* and how he can be restored to the state of *tahor*. Again, this is not just about physical descendants of Aharon – Aharon and his descendants are *modeling these things for all of us*.

The Holy One will then proceed to instruct the *kohanim* regarding how they are to *reverently care for the **korbanot*** surrogates that are brought to the *Mish’kan* by the people as their act of humble worship. Finally, the Holy One will turn His attention to the ***korbanot***-surrogates themselves. The Holy One sees His Bride-to-be in all

her potential glory. He wants each person in His Redeemed Community to understand that blemished, sickly, lame, or sterile animals are not satisfactory surrogates for them. Presentation of such animals as surrogates would constitute a gross insult to the worshipper Himself, to the Holy One, and to the Heavenly Embassy on earth that the *Mish'kan* represented.

Area #3: *The Bridegroom's Special Calendar of Pre-Wedding Events for His Bride*

At this point the Holy One will turn His attention back to the multitudes. He will address the rest of His “*Holiness is ...*” impartation to every man, woman and child in the camp. One of the most important aspects of the kind of holiness He is birthing in us has to do with ‘times and seasons’. The Holy One wants His Bride-people to live by a different calendar – and a dramatically different set of ‘holy days’ – than the peoples of the other nations of the earth.

Under the Holy One’s strategic plan of *kedusha* it is all supposed to start with the weekly Sabbath. Remembering and commemorating the 7th Day Sabbath of Creation Week, and carefully guarding/protecting its holiness is absolutely *essential to the Covenant*. If we are not willing to sanctify the Sabbath, we are not His People. The Sabbath, you see, is designed by the Creator to be the unmovable, unshakeable center-of-gravity of life for all people in covenant with Him. It is the foundational cornerstone of *shalom*.

Next in order of importance is Pesach [Passover], followed by its associated Spring mo’edim – the *7-day Feast of Unleavened Bread*, the *49-day Season of Counting the Omer*, and *Shavuot* [Weeks/Pentecost]. Then come the Fall mo’edim, namely *Yom T’ruah* [often called *Rosh HaShanah*], *Yom Kippur* [the Day of Atonement], *Sukkot* [the Feast of Tabernacles], and *Sh’mini Atzeret* [the 8th day ‘holding over’].

Area #4: *The Blasphemer Narrative*

Emor will then conclude the ‘*Holiness is ...*’/*Beautiful People Arise!* Section of the *Kedusha* Discourse by taking us back to the narrative format we were accustomed to in the book of Exodus. The brief narrative interlude describes a dramatic event that occurred while we were encamped at Sinai. A man born of a Hebrew mother and an Egyptian father will arise in our midst and start causing trouble. He will then speak blasphemous words against the Holy One. Hmmmmn. Does anyone see any prophetic implications in this narrative?

The Divine Author has of course intentionally chosen to insert this brief narrative at this juncture in order to emphasize the points made by the Holy One in the ‘*Holiness is ...*’/*Beautiful People Arise!* download we have just read. But He is also warning us of the prophetic consequences of assimilating with and embracing the

pagan cultures of the world. The result will never be pretty - and will in all cases eventually lead to dissension in our camp and in the world, profaning the Name of the Holy One, and death.

Big Frame of Reference Check!

Remember, this message from our Covenant Partner in Heaven is in the immediate aftermath of one of the central events of *Sefer Vayikra* - the stunning deaths of Nadav and Avihu, Aharon's two eldest sons. With that event death entered our frame of reference for the first time since we left Egypt. Those whom we thought would be the successors to Aharon in the priesthood have been snatched away from us in the prime of life. Torah's narrative tells us concerning this event:

*... fire went out from the Holy One and devoured them,
and they died before the Holy One.*

[Leviticus 10:2(b)]

And Moshe said to Aharon, "This is what the Holy One spoke, saying:

'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy;

***And before all the people I must be glorified.'*"**

*So Aharon held his peace. Then Moshe called Mishael and Elzaphan,
the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aharon, and said to them,*

"Come near, carry your brethren

from before the sanctuary out of the camp."

*So they went near and carried them by their tunics out of the camp,
as Moshe had said. And Moshe said to Aharon,*

*and to Elazar and Itamar, his sons, "Do not uncover your heads
nor tear your clothes, lest you die and wrath come upon all the people.*

***But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel,
bewail the burning which the Holy One has kindled.***

***You are not go out from the door of the tabernacle of meeting,
lest you die, for the anointing oil of the Holy One is upon you."***

And they did according to the word of Moshe.

In Egypt you see, Aharon, Elazar, Itamar would have rushed out to collect and embalm the bodies of Nadav and Avihu. They would have held elaborate services with religious overtones to bewail them. They would have entombed them in a crypt with religious markings all over it. Indeed, even Yosef did thusly with Ya'akov's body when our patriarch died in Egypt. But Aharon, Elazar, and Itamar are *not in Egypt anymore*. In light of what the Holy One has done for them, they were not to look upon death as they did when immersion in Egyptian culture clouded their minds. The ways of Egypt are no longer their ways. They are not to

⁵ The specific words Moshe attributes to the Holy One are not found anywhere in Torah. They may be Moshe's interpretation of such verses as Exodus 19:22, where the Holy One said: ***And let the priests also, which come near to the Holy One, sanctify themselves, lest the Holy One break forth upon them"***, and Exodus 29:44, where the Holy One said: ***And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aharon and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office.***

think of or relate to death - or that which either leads to or flows from death - the way the Egyptians did. And *neither are we*, Dear Reader. So ... what *are we* – as members of the Holy One’s redeemed Community - to do when precious friends like Nadav and Avihu or anyone else dies in our midst? Our primary purpose in life and in death, the sages tell us, is *to bring glory to the Master the world and honor to the Creator of Heaven and earth, for He has called us out of the nations, and set us apart from all the peoples of the earth, and He has not made our lot in life, nor the portion of our inheritance, like theirs.*⁶

In the Holy One’s Redeemed Community reaction and response to matters that involve the *tamei* realm – such as death - is to be much, much different from reaction and response to such things in Egypt – or any other society or culture for that matter. Our *attitudes* and *actions* in relation to everything in the *tamei* realm – including the realm of death – are supposed to *set us apart* from the world and culture around us. But the question remains, how are we who have such a calling to bring honor to the Holy One our God, and glory to His Holy Name, in such a time, and in such a circumstance, as this? The Holy One will not leave us wondering. He will draw us a prophetic picture, using the illustration of the Priestly Family of Aharon.

***The Mishpachah Kohen [i.e. the Priestly Family]
is to Carefully Limit Contact With the Tamei Realm***

Those called to be ambassadors and emissaries of and spokesmen for the Kingdom of Heaven are sent to minister to and among the living, not the dead. Our time, energy, and passion is to be spent on the living. We are called to sniff out the life force in a person, a group, a situation or even an institution, and speak life-enhancing words over that life force. No matter if the life force is dormant, or encased in filth or despair, we are to call it forth, and create an environment [i.e. the tangible, supercharged atmosphere generated by the radical love, practical kindness, and beautiful Words of the Holy One] in which that life force can awaken and thrive. We have no mission to the dead. Indeed, our Divinely designed mission is completely inconsistent with walking or wallowing in realms of death. The dead are to bury their dead; we are to follow our rabbi Yeshua as we walk out the Torah in the land of the living.

In the opening verses of *Emor* the Holy One therefore instructs Moshe that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the intermediaries who mediate on the Holy One’s behalf in the *Mish’kan* is to be that they simply do not blindly and

⁶ This is the Rabbi’s son’s translation of the ancient Aleinu prayer, the first line of which, in transliterated Hebrew, reads: “*Aleinu l’shabeach l’adon ha-kol, lateit gedulah l’yotzeir b’reshit, shelo asanu kegoyei ha-aratzot, v’lo samanu kemishp’chot ha-adamah, shelo sam chelkeinu kahem, v’goraleinu kechal ha-monam.*”

cavalierly dart between the realm of death the way other people do. In particular, those who function as *kohanim* are told to model for us how to take deliberate steps to avoid contact with the *tumah* of death – even when the condition arises in his own nuclear family. As the Torah puts it:

L'nefesh lo-yitama b'amav

Let him not for a soul [i.e. his mind, will, and emotions] take on the tumah of his people

There are of course a few limited exceptions to this general rule. The compassion of the Holy One requires that the restrictions do not apply if the other person involved – who is in the *tamei* realm at the time - is:

1. the *kohen*'s spouse;
2. one of the *kohen*'s parents,
3. a child of the *kohen*, or
4. an unmarried sister of the *kohen*.

Let's read the Holy One's instructions on this subject, with the exceptions:

v'amarta aleihem l'nefesh lo-yitama b'amav

Let him not make his soul tamei among his people,

Ki im-lish'ero ha-karov elav l'imo

except for such close blood relatives as his mother,

ul'aviv v'liv'no ul'vito ul'achiv

father, son, daughter or brother.

V'la'achoto ha-betulah ha-k'rovah elav asher

He may also allow himself to become tamei for his sister

lo-ha-yetah l'ish lah yitama

as long as she is not married.

Lo yitama ba'al b'amav l'hechalo

However, a husband may not make himself tamei for his wife if she is not one the Holy One has said is an appropriate spouse for him.

[Leviticus 21:1(b)- 4]

Here we see another repetition of the Divine pattern of communication after the Fall. First is a *negative instruction* – namely, a *kohen* is not generally to have contact with a *tamei nefesh*. Then there is a *positive instruction* – namely a *kohen* is permitted to have contact with the *tamei nefesh* of certain members of his immediate family. Then there is an explanation – namely, in this instance, that a *kohen* is to be very careful not to defile himself [make himself *tamei*], being an intermediary for the people, because this will profane [de-sanctify] him. [v.4].

This does not mean that the Holy One's intermediaries are, in any regards, to be *insensitive* to other people. It does mean, however, that we are not to fear what

men think, or worry what they feel, more than we honor the Holy One and His calling upon our lives. Our commitment must be first and foremost to the Holy One. Yes - even if it interferes with some very important relationships.

The Priority of the Nuclear Family Unit

As important as the functions of the **kohen** as an *intermediary* between the Holy One and man and as a *teacher of Torah and of the Holy One's ways and an observer of the distinction between the holy and the common and the tahor and the tamei* are, the Holy One wants us to know that *the nuclear family unit is also very important.*

A *kohen's* best friend, dearest aunt, uncle or cousin, or most beloved rabbi or talmid could become *tamei* – or even *die [the ultimate attachment of tumah]* - and the Holy One's instructions were for the *kohen* to go on with his ambassadorial calling in life as usual. He is to give the highest priority to the Divine calling of service to his neighbor and/or the community as a whole. If a member of the *kohen's* nuclear family – defined as his: *wife, his mother or father, his son or daughter, or his unmarried, dependent sister* – becomes *tamei* however, the Holy One wants the *kohen* to feel free to lay aside his ambassadorial calling for as long as he deemed necessary in order to effectively deal with his nuclear family's needs, to bury his dead if need be, and to share the grief of and to give support to and receive support from the members of his immediate family.

Avraham interrupted his ministry to purchase a tomb for and bury the remains of his beloved wife Sarah. Ya'akov paused on his journey from Lavan's house and buried Rachel on the road near *Beit-Lechem*. This teaches us a very important lesson about the Holy One's priorities. Long before He constituted society, you see, the Holy One *personally established* the family unit⁷. He *defined very clearly for us* – in today's aliyah - what is and is not a family unit. He has made it clear in Torah that the family unit as He established and defined it is to have priority over a person's 'ministry'⁸. The priority hierarchy in the Holy One's kingdom lines up something like the following:

⁷ He did this at Creation. He reaffirmed it at the time of the Flood. Moreover He gave us the book of Genesis, outlining His interactions with the patriarchs, and teaching us the family-centered covenant lifestyle, before the book of Exodus, in which He broadened the terms of our covenant to include community function and responsibility. The foundation for and springboard of community function and responsibility, however, remains *the family unit*.

⁸ For instance in Deuteronomy 6 we are told to first speak the words of Torah 'in our homes', and only then are we told to speak it as we 'walk by the way'. The Holy One further prioritizes teaching Torah to one's *children*, and telling us to *write it on the doorposts of our homes* before He tells us to write it '*in our gates*' [i.e. outside our homes and with regard to persons other than our immediate families].

1. Increasing and enjoying one's Intimacy and communion with the Holy One
2. Exercising and cultivating the individual calling upon one's life;
3. Tending to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of one's immediate family [spouse, parents, children, and unmarried sisters]
4. Tending to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the widow, the fatherless, the alien and the poor who lives among you;
5. Maintaining - or at least seeking to do away with everything that prevents, hinders, or threatens - *tahor* status⁹
- 6 Engaging in the *mitzvot*, *mishpatim* and *chukot of Torah*
7. Surrendering one's Personal goals, desires, appetites, and urges to the Holy One's will and mission.

How does one walk out these priorities? First, one must realize that the Holy One and 'public ministry' are not the same thing. The Holy One is a PERSONA. He is all-powerful and all wise. He does not 'need' us or our ministry to accomplish His plan of redemption and restoration – and neither does the world. This is humbling but true. As Shaul said, no man should think himself more important than he is. **Romans 12:2.** So - how important do you think YOU are? Do you find yourself thinking people outside your immediate family NEED you, your knowledge, your *mitzvot*, and/or ministry? Think again. Renew your mind. Let the Holy One's truth deliver you from your Egyptian-style bondage.

From time to time, the Holy One gives us, as His children, the privilege and opportunity to participate in what He – the power and force behind all true 'ministry' – is doing in the world. Wow! What a great and loving Father He is! But if we do not participate, for whatever reason, do not kid yourself - He has it all under control. The Holy One does not wring His hands in despair. Heaven does not panic. And He does not let His will go undone. *He will find someone else*, and will *give them the opportunity to be His vessel*. And believe it or not, the one - or ones - He calls upon will probably do a much better job than we would if we neglected our family or our personal spiritual health to 'minister'.

The spiritual lives of other people will not, in the long run, suffer one whit if we, as the Holy One calls us to do, deal with our family relationships first. Why?

⁹ I place this above even the performance of *mitzvot* because the Holy One says that if a person – even a *kohen* - is in a *tamei* state, he is not to even to enter the *mish'kan*, much less participate in approaching the Holy One though *korbanot* or any other service to the community. See Leviticus 11-15 regarding persons who are not *kohanim*, and see Leviticus 22:3-9 regarding the *kohanim* themselves. The point is clear: our first task in the course of loving the Holy One is to maintain ourselves in a *tahor* and *kadosh* state, so we can clearly *sh'ma* His voice [distinguishing His Voice from all others], follow His leading (and His alone) as a sheep follows its shepherd, and can therefore *sh'mar* and *asah* all His *mitzvot* in a way which will make *kiddush Adonai* [bring glory to His Name] – just doing *what we see our Father doing*, as Yeshua taught.

Because the Holy One *cares much, much more for people than we ever could*. He *knows what they really need spiritually* [as opposed to what they *think they need*, or what they *want*] *much better than we ever will*. And He is *fully capable of meeting people's real spiritual needs with or without our help*. If we ever think we are so important that other people cannot do without our *mitzvot* or ministry, or that a single soul will be one iota worse off if we do not minister, then *we need professional help*¹⁰. Are we really so deluded that we think ourselves more important, more caring, and more capable than the Holy One? Relax. *Breathe in the Holy One's breath of life*. Escape the world of the *chol* – the man-initiated, man-centered, man-focused, man-driven, man-pleasing, man-glorifying world of frenzied religious activity. Come – enter and learn your way around in the world of things that are *kadosh*. It is the secret place to which we are called to ‘follow Him’. It is the place of abiding into which Messiah has become our portal.

A Brief Look at Haftarah Emor

Ezekiel 44:15-31

The haftarah for the week of *Emor* is taken from a latter chapter in the prophetic book of Ezekiel. Our readings begin with verse 15 of chapter 44. These verses have to do with a faithful remnant of *kohanim* [Aharonic priests] who will be raised up in the latter days. Here are the first two verses of our haftarah directly transliterated and translated from the Hebrew.

V'ha-kohanim ha-Levi'im b'nei Tzadok

But the Levitical priests, the son of Tzadok,

asher shameiru et-mishmeret mik'dashi

who kept the charge of My sanctuary

bit'ot b'nei-Yisra'el me'alay hemah

when the children of Israel went astray from Me,

yik'reivu elay l'sharteni

they will come near to Me to minister to Me;

v'ameidu lef'nei l'hak'riv li chelev v'dam

and they will stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood

ne'um Adonai Elohim

says the Holy One God.

Hemah yavo'u el-mikdashi

They will enter My sanctuary,

V'hemah yik'reivu el-shulchani l'sharteni

and come to My table, to minister to Me,

¹⁰ Some call this delusion a “Messiah complex”.

v'shamru et-mish'marti
and they will keep My charge.

The 'faithful remnant' of *kohanim* prophesied in this haftarah is said to be from the lineage of *Tzadok*. Since the name 'Tzadok' means 'righteous one' – or more Hebraically, one who does the will of the Holy One – it is probably in some respects referring to matters of character and dedication. But there was also a *kohen* mentioned in the TaNaKh who had the name *Tzadok*. He lived and served at the time of the wars between Saul and David and later between David and Absalom. He is described as '*a young man mighty of valor*' in I Chronicles chapter 12. He saw the anointing on David's life and recognized that the Spirit had left Saul. At risk of his life and ministry he therefore chose to align himself with David. Indeed, even when David was an outcast Tzadok and his entire house rejected Saul and gave their hearts and allegiance to David. Tzadok was, it seems, always there when David needed him. Hence when so many others were being carried away with the rebellion of Absalom and bailing out on David's kingdom like rats leaving a sinking ship Tzadok remained faithful to his king through it all. Even when Jerusalem fell to Absalom, regarding Tzadok Scripture says:

*Now behold, Tzadok also came, and all the Levites with him
carrying the ark of the covenant of the Holy One...
But the king said to Tzadok, "Return the ark of the Holy One to the city..."
The king said also to Tzadok the priest, Are you not a seer?
Return to the city in peace and your two sons with you,
your son Abimaaz and Yonatan the son of Abiatar.
See, I am going to wait at the fords of the wilderness
until word comes from you to inform me"*
2 Samuel 15:23-25,27-28

Tzadok became David's 'eyes and ears' behind enemy lines. He risked his life to serve the Holy One's anointed king. May all our hearts be surrendered unto our King like unto the example of Tzadok.

The B'rit Chadasha Readings for Parsha Emor **I Peter 2:4-10**

In the B'rit Chadasha reading I have selected for parsha *Emor*, Kefa [known by most English speakers as 'Peter'] exhorts us as follows:

*You also, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood,
to approach the Holy One through spiritual korbanot
acceptable to the Holy One through Yeshua the Messiah.*
[I Peter 1:5]

Under the inspiration of *Ruach Ha-Qodesh* Kefa likens all who have covenant relationship with the Divine Bridegroom in Messiah to *living stones*. Living stones? What does that mean? How can a *stone* [in Greek, *lithos*] *live* [in Greek *zao*]? Are we to become like *living tablets of stone* inscribed by the Finger of the Holy

One with the words of the Torah? Yes, Dear Reader. That is exactly what we are called to become. Beautiful people, ARISE!

*May the Words of Torah burst forth over His People this day
as a sunrise bursts forth over the earth,
and may we become, at last, recognizable as Priests of Our God.*

The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus for Week of Parsha Emor

Petition #3: S'lach - Forgiveness

S'lach lanu Avinu, ki chata'einu

Forgive us, Our Father, for we have sinned

m'chal lanu, Malkeinu, ki fasha'einu

Pardon us, Our King, for we have done wrong

ki m'chel v'slach Atah

Pardon and forgive

Baruch Atah Adonai chanun ha-marve l'sloach

Blessed are You, O Holy One, Who graciously forgives