



## **Parasha Emor**

May 9, 2020

*Torah:* Leviticus 21:1-24:3

*Haftarah:* Ezekiel 44:15-31

*Ketuvim Sh'lichim:* 1Peter 2:4-10

*Shabbat shalom mishpacha!* Our *parasha* today is *Emor*, meaning, “speak.” *1* Then Adonai said to Moses, “Speak to the *kohanim*, the sons of Aaron, and say to them,..(etc.)” (Leviticus 21:1a TLV). Two of our chapters today continue with the theme of holiness which began last *Shabbat*. Chapters 21 and 22 address the *kohanim* and what they are and are not allowed to do. It also includes some instructions for the Israelite with regard to holiness. As Messianic followers of Yeshua, Jew and Gentile together, we understand the importance of the *Torah*, but also understand that not all *Torah* is possible today. Because we have no Tabernacle, none of the *mitzvot* in Leviticus 21 and 22 relating to Tabernacle worship and the priesthood can be carried out today. The last two verses of chapter 22 are not relating to the Tabernacle and can be carried out today and we will look at them presently. But, even though most cannot be carried out today, we can still learn a lot from them. Most have some application in a spiritual sense to us today. Yeshua’s teachings all came from the *Torah*. And, we who have a Messianic understanding of *Torah*, know the importance which He has placed on our understanding it. His words in Matthew 5; “until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter of the *Torah* will pass away,” show us that understanding and obeying are vitally important. This means that they are all still there. We should not begin lining out the ones which cannot be done today. But, Yeshua will not hold us responsible for commands we cannot observe today. But, they are still on the books and could be reinstated when He returns. We don’t know that they will, just that none will pass away until heaven and earth pass away. But, we should know which ones we can keep and which we can’t. It takes some study on our part, but we have to know these things in order to be Yeshua’s disciples. We have to learn how to follow Him.

To understand why it’s important that we follow *Torah*, whether it’s *Torah* in the *Tanakh* or *Torah* in the *Ketuvim Sh'lichim*, the writings of Yeshua’s disciples, we must understand what ADONAI requires of us. And, it is through the *Torah* and only through the *Torah* that we can understand. That’s because *Torah* is not just Law. Its primary meaning is teaching and instruction. And, in learning *Torah*, whether from Exodus or Matthew, or any other book in the Scripture, we are taught how to be holy, how to be set apart from the things of the world as we follow ADONAI and Yeshua. We are to present our best to Him. In our *parasha* last week, ADONAI said: *26* “You are to be holy to Me, for I, Adonai, am holy, and have set you apart from the peoples, so that you would be Mine” (Leviticus 20:26 TLV). He was speaking to Israel, the nation which He called to be priests to the nations. Those of us, Jew and Gentile, who have trusted Yeshua, are a part of Israel and called to be holy. We cannot be Yeshua’s followers on our own terms, but only on His terms. And, we have to learn how we are to follow Him.

We are not going to speak further about chapters 21 and 22 and we will go now to Leviticus chapter 23. It is a chapter which should be as familiar to us as the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm or 1 Corinthians 13. Within this chapter, we find every special event which ADONAI calls us to observe. Not every command we are to observe, but every event, every gathering that He has commanded for us. They are also described individually in several other places in *Torah*, but here in chapter 23 is the only place in which we can find them all and also in the order in which they are to be observed. ADONAI calls them *mo'adei*, מוֹעֲדֵי, “appointed time or designated time.” 1 *Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying: 2 “Speak to Bnei-Yisrael, and tell them: These are the appointed moadim of Adonai, which you are to proclaim to be holy convocations—My moadim (Leviticus 23:1-2 TLV). Mo'adim is plural. A holy convocation is a mikra kodesh; מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ. It is an event which ADONAI has planned and designated to be attended by those who worship Him. As followers of Yeshua who have understood the importance of the ma'adim, we choose to obey and assemble ourselves at the designated times which our Creator has specified that we should appear before Him.*

We do understand that; that we should appear before Him. But, where do we appear before Him? Yeshua's disciples worked through either the Temple or a local institution and they appeared to Him at one of these institutions. Reading in the books of Exodus through Revelation, we know that ADONAI set up systems of leadership through which His government was to work. We don't find any institutions in Genesis which we are directed to attend. But, once the Tabernacle was erected and until the Temple was destroyed, it was through the Temple leadership, the *Kohen HaGadol*, the High Priest, and the ordinary *kohanim* with the assistance of the various categories of Levites. Once the government was centralized in Jerusalem, up until the Babylonian captivity, that's where everyone went to worship. But, after the captivity, not everyone had access to Jerusalem and so there had to be some way for the people of Israel to worship in their home locations. While Israel was in captivity in Babylon, a new institution developed, the synagogue. They were called “little sanctuaries,” local substitutes for the Temple and they were brought back to Israel when captivity was over. Leaders developed within each synagogue and a way for the people to worship ADONAI throughout the week and on Shabbat was provided for them. ADONAI seemed to bless these little sanctuaries as the years continued and we find that not only did Yeshua grow up in one, but during His three year ministry, He also taught in many, many, of the synagogues in Israel. Within the Jewish community, that tradition has continued through the centuries and today the synagogue is the primary place of worship for Jews.

From a close reading of the Book of Acts, we find that for the first seven years or so after Yeshua ascended to His Father, there were only Jews worshipping in the synagogues of Israel and within the great number of synagogues which had formed all over the known world. These Jews in all these places included Gentiles who had converted to Judaism and were also considered to be Jews. There was still a very large Jewish population in Babylon and a large enclave in Egypt and there were synagogues there. According to Josephus, there were more than 400 in Jerusalem in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Jews were everywhere in the known world and everywhere that they were, there were synagogues in which to worship ADONAI.

But, ADONAI did not wish for it to be only Jews who were worshipping Him. Yeshua's disciples, the very dedicated and spiritual men that they were, still followed the customs of the elders regarding contact with Gentiles. Gentiles were considered unclean. And, most of them were unclean in the spiritual sense, because they were idolaters. Most worshipped pagan gods and followed practices which ADONAI had specifically prohibited for Israel in *Torah*. Even back when Israel was in the wilderness, the rule was that you couldn't do it on

your own. It had to be done in the Tabernacle under leadership direction. Some Israelites were sacrificing outside the Tabernacle and ADONAI said it must stop. He said: *7 They are no longer to offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons after which they play the prostitute* (Leviticus 17:7 TLV). But, many within Israel developed relationships with the goat demons behind many other false gods of the Gentiles, Ba'al, the supreme god of the Cananites, Astoreth, the Cananite fertility goddess, and Molech, a Cananite god to whom they sacrificed their children, and many others. By the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the Gentiles populations had come up with many other gods, primarily Greek and Roman gods and goddesses, whose worship involved male and female prostitution and many other things prohibited by *Torah*. Because most Gentiles followed one or more of these goat demon idols, they were off limits to the people of Israel.

*Shimon Kefa* was happily following the traditions of the Jewish elders when ADONAI spoke to him about the Gentile situation. He had no idea that ADONAI wanted Gentiles to be brought into the Commonwealth of Israel. But, now was ADONAI's time. Peter had a vision, a vision of unclean things in a sheet (Acts 10). G-d said to him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." He then said: "What God has made clean, you must not consider unholy." And, it happened a third time and the sheet was taken up. It didn't take Peter long to figure out what ADONAI was saying to him. When three Gentiles appeared at the gate asking him to come with them to the house of another Gentile, Cornelius, he went with them because ADONAI had told him that He sent them. When he entered Cornelius's house, it became clear to him. *28 He said to them, "You yourselves know that it is not permitted for a Jewish man to associate with a non-Jew or to visit him. Yet God has shown me that I should call no one unholy or unclean"* (Acts 10:28 TLV). It had nothing to do with what a follower of Yeshua could eat, but everything to do with whom G-d wanted to be a part of the Commonwealth of Israel.

To be a Gentile convert to Judaism in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, there were certain requirements. A man or a woman had to be immersed and a man had to be circumcised. They were also required to follow *Torah*, which to us seems a good thing. But, there was an additional requirement. They had to agree to follow Oral Torah, a verbal set of laws and practices supposedly received from Moses, but never written down. And, it was required for Gentiles converting to Judaism in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. There is no record that Yeshua's disciples ever followed it. When discussing how to bring in new Gentile converts in Acts 15, Peter seemed to make reference to it when he said: *9 He made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts through faith. 10 Why then do you put God to the test by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples—which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear* (Acts 15:9-10 TLV)? We can be certain that *Kefa* was not referring to the written Torah when he said this. He and the other disciples continued to faithfully attend Temple events and keep the *moadim*. And, *Sha'ul* most certainly did, even paying for Nazerite sacrifices in the Temple. We can be certain that Peter was not referring to the written *Torah*.

Our discussion at the moment is how, through what agency, we are to present ourselves before ADONAI at His holy convocations. The Jews had synagogues, but what were the new Gentile followers of Yeshua to do? Some did go to Jewish synagogues to learn *Torah* as *Ya'acov*, Jacob, Yeshua's brother suggested: *21 "For Moses from ancient generations has had in every city those who proclaim him, since he is read in all the synagogues every Shabbat"* (Acts 15:21 TLV). Jacob suggested that they should attend the local synagogue on *Shabbat* to hear the *Torah* read. Proclaiming Moses was proclaiming *Torah*.

After *Sha'ul* became Yeshua's follower and was called into ministry, he and other disciples went into the Gentile lands with the Gospel and more and more Gentiles became followers of Yeshua. Groups meeting in homes many times became new congregations, and congregations were formed in cities of the Roman empire. But, it was all done under ADONAI's authority. There is no direct evidence that *Sha'ul* had hands laid upon him giving him the authority to form congregations by the Jerusalem elders, but it is certainly implied. In his letter to Galatia, speaking of the Jerusalem leaders, he said: *7 On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the Good News for the uncircumcised just as Peter was for the circumcised* (Galatians 2:7 TLV). Being entrusted with the Good News for the Gentiles meant that these locations with groups of new followers of Yeshua needed some way to observe the *moadim*, ADONAI's appointed times and conduct worship services. *Sha'ul* gave *s'micha*, ordination, to two men; Timothy, a Jew and Titus, a Gentile. They were given authority to establish congregations in locations which they believed warranted them where they travelled in the Roman Empire. Almost all of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy deals with the qualifications of leaders and how to choose them. In 1Timothy 5 *Sha'ul* said to Timothy: *22 Do not lay hands on anyone hastily or take part in the sins of others—keep yourself pure* (1Timothy 5:22 TLV). Laying on hands is *s'micha*, ordination. Whether it was *zekenim*, elders, or *shamashim*, deacons, or other leaders, Timothy was admonished to prayerfully consider who he was ordaining. *Sha'ul* gave this same charge to Titus: *5 The reason I left you in Crete was so that you would set in order the things that remain and appoint elders in every city as I directed you—* (Titus 1:5 TLV). Now, many of the Gentiles had congregations in which to worship ADONAI and to celebrate the *mo'edim*.

But, which *mo'edim* could they celebrate? Reading through the list of seven *mo'edim* in Leviticus, we find six of them could only be celebrated in Israel and when celebrated there, there had to be a Temple in which to make sacrifices. There also has to be a priesthood through whom the sacrifices are offered. This means that there is only one *mo'ed* which we are commanded to celebrate which can be celebrated wherever we are in the world. It is the *Shabbat*. It is the first *mo'ed* listed in Leviticus 23, the Sabbath, and is held every seventh day in every week of the year. *“Work may be done for six days, but the seventh day is a Shabbat of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You are to do no work—it is a Shabbat to Adonai in all your dwellings”* (Leviticus 23:3 TLV). In other words, *Shabbat* is a *mo'ed*, a holy convocation, a time to appear before ADONAI, wherever your dwelling place is in the world. The word *Shabbat* means “rest or cessation of work.” When we have ceased our regular labor, we are commanded to come before ADONAI together to worship Him. It has always been together, as one people, regardless of when it was or who it was that was a part of the Commonwealth of Israel.

The other seven *mo'edim* are called “special Sabbaths” or *Shabbatons*, and are held once per year at the time designated by ADONAI. *Pesach*, Passover, is a *mo'ed*, but not a Sabbath, and is a special *mo'ed* within the *mo'ed* of *Hag HaMatzah*, the Festival of Unleavened Bread. According to the *Torah* of Leviticus 23, the seven special Sabbaths can only be conducted in the Land of Israel when there is a Temple and when there is a Levitical Priesthood. But, the weekly Sabbath is to be observed everywhere in the world that ADONAI's followers dwell.

There are eight Sabbaths listed in Leviticus 23, the weekly Sabbath and the seven special Sabbaths of the five other *mo'edim*. The seven are the first and seventh days of *Chag HaMatzah*, the Festival of Unleavened Bread, *Shavuot*, the day of Pentecost, *Yom Teruah*, The Festival of Trumpets, also called *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, the

first day of *Sukkot*, the Festival of Tabernacles and the eighth day of conclusion, *Shemini Atzeret*. Which of these are we commanded to observe in Thomasville, Georgia? The answer is none of them. We cannot because neither are we in Israel nor is there a Temple and a priesthood. But, they are important to us and we do very much choose to commemorate them by worshipping ADONAI on these days. We celebrate *Pesach* and *Chag HaMatzah* and *Shavuot*, to recognize and honor their fulfillment of the ancient celebrations by Yeshua as our Passover lamb and His sending of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. And, we celebrate *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot* as rehearsals of the coming time when they will be fulfilled by Yeshua through His return as *Melekh Yisra'el*, King of Israel. During the 1<sup>st</sup> century and up until the destruction of the Temple in the year 70, only the residents of Jerusalem could celebrate these five *mo'adim*. If you lived elsewhere, you had to go there. The congregations in the diaspora founded by Timothy and Titus could not. They could only commemorate them as we who live outside Jerusalem still do today.

Observing the one *mitzvah* in Leviticus 23 that we can observe and are required by ADONAI to observe, gathering ourselves together weekly, is extremely important for us. Not only that G-d has commanded it, but also, our being together is where we interact with each other and rub against each other and the ministry takes place. *Shimon Kefa* describes us who worship ADONAI as living stones: *4 As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house—a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Messiah Yeshua* (1Peter 2:4-5 TLV). We are being built up. We haven't made it to completeness yet. But, we are living stones, stones capable of growth and change. And, we are built on the foundation of Yeshua, the chief cornerstone. *Sha'ul* said: *19 So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household. 20 You have been built on the foundation made up of the emissaries and prophets, with Messiah Yeshua Himself being the cornerstone. 21 In Him the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple for the Lord. 22 In Him, you also are being built together into God's dwelling place in the Ruach* (Ephesians 2:19-22 TLV). *Sha'ul* was speaking to Gentiles, those who by trusting Yeshua, have been grafted into the metaphorical olive tree representing Israel (Romans 11). Also included in that building are Messianic Jews who are built on the same foundation. And, *Sha'ul* says that we are growing. We haven't completed the construction of this Holy Temple for ADONAI, because it's a process, a process that each one of us is going through as we add to the Temple. *Sha'ul* admitted that he, himself, had not made it: *12 Not that I have already obtained this or been perfected, but I press on if only I might take hold of that for which Messiah Yeshua took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself as having taken hold of this. But this one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the reward of the upward calling of God in Messiah Yeshua* (Philippians 3:12-14 TLV). None of us living today has achieved this goal, but we are exhorted to press in for it. This is not about salvation. We have trusted Yeshua as our Savior. This is about following Him as He taught us to do? As *Sha'ul* said, it is an upward calling. It is something which must continue to grow throughout our lives. When we first trusted Yeshua, we were very excited about following Him. We wanted to tell everyone. But, now, do we? Yeshua had this complaint against the congregation at Ephesus: *4 "But this I have against you, that you have forsaken your first love. 5 Remember then from where you have fallen. Repent and do the deeds you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your menorah from its place—unless you repent"* (Revelation 2:2-5 TLV). This is not necessarily an indictment against a specific congregation today, but I think, an indictment of much of the body of Messiah. Many have

all become complacent and have lost their first love. And, if we are in that group, we must return. Repentance is on the minds of many within Yeshua's body today, both in our Messianic circles and also in the Church. It is being called for by many leaders and was very specifically called for this week during the Thomasville/Thomas County National Day of Prayer service. *Shimon Kefa* exhorts us: *17 For the time has come for judgment to begin with the house of God. If judgment begins with us first, what will be the end for those who disobey the Good News of God* (1Peter 4:17 TLV)? As we see the world in turmoil today, that verse is especially important for us. The time has come for us to make our own spiritual decisions so that G-d's spiritual Temple can continue to grow toward completion, becoming a body without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27). Yeshua is not pleased with the luke-warmness of many in His body. He said to the congregation at Laodicea: *14 "...: "Thus says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Originator of God's creation: 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. Oh, that you were either cold or hot! 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spew you out of My mouth"* (Revelation 3:14b-16 TLV). I believe that Yeshua is also speaking here to the whole body of Messiah. We are all lukewarm. I indict myself. I have not been the follower of Yeshua that I should have been. We must examine ourselves: *5 Test yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Examine yourselves! Or don't you know yourselves—that Messiah Yeshua is in you? Unless of course you failed the test* (2Corinthians 13:5 TLV). Some of it is pretty subjective; not necessarily large things, but maybe attitudes and feelings toward others.

Rabbi Herb exhorted us last week to be holy people as he taught on *Parasha, Kedoshim*, which calls us to be Holy People. In that *parasha*, ADONAI tells us three times to be holy (Leviticus 19:2, 20:7 and 20:26). There are two other places other than there where ADONAI tells us this same thing. In Leviticus 11:44-45 He says it twice and in 1Peter 1:15, *Kefa* says it as he refers to these verses in *Torah*. The fact that it is commanded so many times should tip us off that ADONAI is serious about it.

Our G-d is a holy G-d who is separated from uncleanness and sin. To be in a right relationship with Him, we also must be separated from sin. How we honor our Father also directly relates to how we honor our Messiah. Chapters 19 through 22 in Leviticus have dealt with holiness. As chapter 22 ends, ADONAI concludes this discussion about holiness by summing it up this way: *31 "So you are to keep My mitzvot and do them. I am Adonai. 32 You must not profane My holy Name, for I will be made holy among Bnei-Yisrael. I am Adonai who makes you holy, 33 who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am Adonai"* (Leviticus 22:31-33 TLV)). There are three points in these verses that we must focus on. First, we are to keep His *mitzvot*, His commands. Our real relationship with Him after we trust Yeshua is defined by our obedience which proves the real love which we show to Him. Yeshua said: *15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"* (John 14:15 TLV). Second, it is ADONAI who makes us holy. We can't do it ourselves. We have to be holy on His terms only. Third, the words, "I am ADONAI," are a message in themselves. The Hebrew says: *Ani ADONAI, אֲנִי אֲדֹנָי*, "I am ADONAI." What He really said was: "I am YHVH," I am the Creator of the universe who is giving these instructions to you. "Who are you to decide how you are to relate to me"?

But, we also understand that He is a loving G-d. And, He is also a just G-d and He judges us fairly. He is strict for our sake, just as our earthly fathers were. We are not to be wayward children. The point being made is that we know, we know, that we are to keep His *mitzvot*, those which we can keep today. Can we say, "I know that I am not to eat pork and I don't," but then say, "I can decide if I am to honor *Shabbat*?" I am not speaking to the

Church about *Shabbat*. If you missed my discussion of binding and loosing with regard to leadership authority on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, you can read it on the website or watch the You Tube. Today, I am only speaking to those who have decided that *Torah* is for them. But, we must apply our keeping of *Torah* evenhandedly. We cannot decide which of ADONAI's commands we wish to keep.

ADONAI is love. He loves us so much that He sent His only son to die as a sin sacrifice for us. But, love must be reciprocal. In Matthew 22, Mark 12 and Luke 10, Yeshua told us about the two greatest commandments. We are to love the L-rd our G-d with all our heart, all our mind and all our strength; and our neighbor as ourselves (Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19). After answering the Pharisees who asked Him which was the greatest commandment, Yeshua added this: *40 The entire Torah and the Prophets hang on these two commandments*" (Matthew 22:40 TLV). He said that if you love ADONAI and your neighbor, you will obey all that He has asked of you. Are we going to be a part of the living stones which are building ADONAI's spiritual Temple? Are we going to press on to the reward of the upward calling by continually re-evaluating our spiritual walk? I am urging you, just as I am urging myself, to be the best that we can be for our Messiah. I do not mean it to seem that you, our *mishpacha*, are not serving ADONAI at a high level. I believe you are! But, it is now during these especially trying times that we should seek to have an even greater commitment in following Yeshua.

I would like to close with some words from a devotional based on this week's *parasha, Emor*, by Rabbi Ari Enkin in Israel. He said: "The only thing that raises a person and makes him holy is the *Torah* and the *mitzvot* (commandments). There is no such thing as morality, ethics, trust, or dignity outside of *Torah*. When we let our own sense of judgment dictate morality there is no telling how low we might sink. We have seen that when people use their own sense of judgement and morality, it often leads to evil, sometimes even genocide. Whether it's you, me or the High Priest, we have to remember that no one is immune. Only a life that is guided by *Torah* can bring a person to the proper level of dignity and holiness." Those, to me, are words of wisdom. This, I believe, is the bottom line: ADONAI calls each of us to be holy because He is holy! Our individual holiness is defined by our love for Him which then determines our obedience to Him. As Yeshua said to us: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." *Shabbat shalom!*