



Parasha Emor

May 1, 2021

Torah: Leviticus 21:1-24:3

Haftarah: Ezekiel 44:15-31

Ketuwim Sh'lichim: 1Peter 2:4-10

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! Our *parasha* today is *Emor*, which means “speak.” *1* Then Adonai said to Moses, “Speak to the kohanim, the sons of Aaron, and say to them,..(etc.)” (Leviticus 21:1a TLV). Leviticus chapters 21 and 22 are directions for the *kohanim*, the priests. These *mitzvot* are all about their holiness, separating themselves for ADONAI from unclean things. It was also a very practical thing. A *kohen* who had become unclean could not serve and their purpose was to serve ADONAI in ministry to Israel. There are some of us in Messianic Judaism today who are *kohanim*, descendants of Aaron, but these *mitzvot* are not applicable to them because there is no established Levitical priesthood and no Temple in which to minister. Possibly one day some of our Messianic *kohanim* will minister in a future Temple. But for us today, all of us, *kohen*, Levite, Israelite and Gentile, the concept of separating ourselves from unclean things has spiritual application, although not the specific things in this *parasha*. We are called to be clean because we, as Yeshua’s followers, are *kohanim*. Each of us is called to be a priest before ADONAI under our High Priest Yeshua. That is our objective for today and we can establish it with just four Scriptures.

ADONAI charged Israel as they were about to approach Mount Sinai by saying to Moses: 6 “So as for you, you will be to Me a kingdom of *kohanim* and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you are to speak to Bnei-Yisrael” (Exodus 19:6 TLV). The physical people of Israel, the Jews of today, are still called to be a kingdom of priests for ADONAI. From the atheist Jew to the orthodox Jew and from the ultra-orthodox Jew to the Messianic Jew, they are all called to be *kohanim* for ADONAI. And, one day soon, those Jews that don’t know Yeshua now will accept their calling even as they mourn for Him and pledge their lives to Him. All Israel will be saved. That’s Israel in the flesh. But, what about Gentiles? Are we called to be *kohenim* in the sense that ADONAI called Israel?

To have this calling, a Gentile must first become a part of Israel. And they can do that by trusting in the Messiah of Israel, Yeshua. Before they trust they must acknowledge that they need a Savior, that they are sinners who have no righteousness and no other means of forgiveness. Then they must repent of their sins and receive Yeshua by faith. By trusting in Him, a Gentile acknowledges that He is the only perfect sacrifice for his sins and in response to the forgiveness He extends to him, he commits his life to serve Him. Many people don’t realize that they did that, but that’s what they did.

Most who trust Yeshua also have no idea that by doing so they became a part of Israel, that they actually enter into covenant with the G-d of Israel. By trusting in Yeshua, a Jew or a Gentile becomes a covenant partner in the *B’rit Chadasha*, the New Covenant. The Prophet Jeremiah spoke of the future cutting of this New Covenant at a time when Israel was far from G-d and terrible things were happening in the Kingdom of Judah. The latter days of his prophetic life took place as the Temple was being destroyed and the Jewish people were

being taken to Babylon. But even in all this tragedy, hope was prophesied: 30 *“Behold, days are coming” —it is a declaration of Adonai— “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 31 not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they broke My covenant, though I was a husband to them.” it is a declaration of Adonai. 32 “But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days” — it is a declaration of Adonai— “I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people”* (Jeremiah 31:30-32 TLV). Note that in Christian Bibles these verses are 31-33.

The days that Jeremiah spoke of did come and on 14 Nisan in the year 30 CE, some 600 years later, the covenant was cut. Yeshua, ADONAI’s only begotten Son, the Passover Lamb, died on the cross in our place. He became the substitute sacrifice for all, Jew and Gentile, who place their trust, their faith, in Him. And as sad as it is, ADONAI said this about some of Israel through Jeremiah: *“For they broke My covenant, though I was a husband to them.” it is a declaration of Adonai.* Israel has broken the covenant which ADONAI made with them at Sinai by rejecting His Son, the only effective blood sacrifice available after the Temple was destroyed. 11 *“For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your lives—for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life”* (Leviticus 17:11 TLV). *Torah, Tefillah and Tzedakah, Torah study, prayer and charitable giving, can’t take the place of blood sacrifice!*

But this doesn’t mean that ADONAI has rejected Israel. Almost immediately after saying *“they broke My covenant,”* just three verses later He said this: 34 *Thus says Adonai, who gives the sun as a light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars as a light by night, who stirs up the sea so its waves roar, Adonai-Tzva’ot is His Name: 35 “Only if this fixed order departs from before Me” —it is a declaration of Adonai— “then also might Israel’s offspring cease from being a nation before Me—for all time.” 36 Thus says Adonai: “Only if heaven above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then also I will cast off the offspring of Israel—for all they have done.” It is a declaration of Adonai* (Jeremiah 31:34-36 TLV). He has not rejected Israel either as a nation or as individuals. He confirmed this in the verse before by saying: 33 *“No longer will each teach his neighbor or each his brother, saying: ‘Know Adonai,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest.” it is a declaration of Adonai. “For I will forgive their iniquity, their sin I will remember no more”* (Jeremiah 31:33 TLV). This is the only part of the New Covenant prophecy by Jeremiah that has not been fulfilled. But, it will be and soon! This is the very promise of the salvation of all Israel spoken of by *Sha’ul* in Romans 11. Jeremiah prophesied: *“for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest.” Sha’ul said: 26 “and in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer shall come out of Zion. He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. 27 And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins”* (Romans 11:26-27 TLV). His covenant with them is the “New Covenant.” The day is coming soon when Israel in the flesh will look on Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Yeshua as for an only son (Zechariah 12:10). But each human being, Jew and Gentile, has pierced Him. It was all of our sins that put Him on the stake.

Because ADONAI made His New Covenant with Israel, we’ve now established that Gentiles who trust in Yeshua actually become a part of Israel. Before going any further, we must understand the New Covenant. How does it relate to the Covenant at Sinai, the Covenant of Moses, which ADONAI says that Israel broke? Is the New Covenant something completely new or is it something else? It is something else. ADONAI didn’t throw it all out

because Israel broke it. We begin our understanding by understanding the words “*B’rit Chadasha*,” New Covenant. *B’rit*, בְּרִית, means covenant. There is no question about that. But what about *chadasha*? The Hebrew of Jeremiah 31:30 in the *Mechon Mamre Tanakh* (JPS 1917) says “I will make a *b’rit chadasha*,” בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה, a “new covenant.” Looking up Jeremiah 31:31 in Strong’s (the Christian Bible numbering), we find the word underlying *chadasha* is *chadash*, an adjective meaning “new.” In both Hebrew texts and Gentile texts Jeremiah 31:31 says “New Covenant.” It is the New Covenant! Now consider David’s words in Psalm 51: 12 “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me*” (Psalm 51:12 TLV). (To look it up in Strong’s we have to look up verse 10). For this verse in Strong’s, we find exactly the same word *chadash*, חֲדָשָׁה, used as a verb and meaning: to renew, repair. *Chadash* means new, but can also mean renewed.

Jeremiah prophesied a “new covenant,” but it’s not completely new. There were some changes made. According to the Book of Hebrews, it was made on better promises and given a new and everlasting priesthood, the priesthood of Yeshua, a *kohen* after the order of *Malkitzedek*. Yeshua’s ancestor David said this of Him: *4 Adonai has sworn, and will not change His mind: “You are a Kohen forever according to the order of Melechizedek”* (Psalm 110:4 TLV). The writer of Hebrews repeated these words in chapter 7, verse 17. And then in chapter 8, the writer speaks of Yeshua as the *Kohen Gadol*, the High Priest and then quotes from Jeremiah 31: 8 *For finding fault with them, He says, “Behold, days are coming, says Adonai, when I will inaugurate a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”* (Hebrews 8:8 TLV). The Greek word translated “new” is *kainos* (kahee-nos). It has the meanings of new, fresh, unused or novel. The question we have to ask is does *kainos* mean “completely new?” We already know the answer because we know what the Hebrew says and this is a repetition of the Hebrew. Another example which helps us to understand is the new moon, an event which occurs every month. In Hebrew it’s called *Rosh Chodesh*, the head of the month. *Chodesh*, translated as month, is a form of the word *chadash* which as we have said can mean either new or renewed. The same is true for the moon. Although it’s called a new moon, the very small sliver which we can see, it’s not really new. It’s the same old moon which has been renewed by receiving “less” reflected light from the sun. The rest of the moon is still there, but is not illuminated on the 1st of the Hebrew month. The “new moon” is actually renewed monthly.

Just as the moon is not completely new, but is renewed as it rotates around the earth, so is the New Covenant renewed, refreshed with the changes which ADONAI made. He gave us a new High Priest to replace the Levitical priesthood, the descendants of Aaron. Although Yeshua died and became the *Kohen Gadol* many years before the Book of Hebrews was written, the Levitical priests continued to offer sacrifices and were still offering in the Temple at the time of its writing. But their time was about to come to an end. The last verse of Hebrews chapter 8 says this: *13 “In saying new,” He has treated the first as old; but what is being made old and aging is close to vanishing”* (Hebrews 8:13 TLV). The “new” in this verse is the New Covenant, the covenant which was renewed by replacing the “first.” The “first” is the “first priesthood,” the Levitical priesthood. At the time of the writing of Hebrews in the early to mid-60’s CE, the Levitical priesthood was aging and close to vanishing. And it did vanish in the year 70 when the Temple was destroyed. Vanishing along with the Levitical priesthood also were all of the *Torah mitzvot* which required both a Temple and a priesthood to carry out and leaving for us the *mitzvot*, the remaining commands which ADONAI has for us today.

I have not forgotten that I began by saying that this is about us as *kohanim*, priests. We began by establishing in Exodus 19 that ADONAI called Israel to be a nation of priests. Next we established that ADONAI promised a New Covenant in Jeremiah 31 because Israel broke the one He made through Moses at Mount Sinai. We are all very familiar with Yeshua's words at His last Passover about His body and His blood. His words established what would happen on the stake the next day: *19 And when He had taken matzah and offered the bracha, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, given for you. Do this in memory of Me." 20 In the same way, He took the cup after the meal, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you"* (Luke 22:19-20 TLV). Yeshua activated the New covenant. That seems clear enough, but let's go a little further. The writer of Hebrews adds this: *16 "For where there is a covenant, the death of the one who made it must be established. 17 For a covenant is secured upon the basis of dead bodies, since it has no strength as long as the one who made it lives. 18 That is why not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood"* (Hebrews 9:16-18 TLV). The word from which "covenant" is translated is *diathéké* (dee-ath-ay'-kay) which means testament, will or covenant. It's very easy for us Americans to understand it as a "will" because we are very familiar with a will. It is a document written by a living person which does not become effective until after the person dies. We can also understand it as covenant because we know that blood had to be shed and there had to be death. The covenant ADONAI made with Abraham and his descendants was cut with the death of animals. Check it out in Genesis 17. But when the New Covenant was cut, it was Yeshua's death which sealed it. The words which we just read in Hebrews 9:16-17 tell us that Yeshua was the one who made the New Covenant and that it was His death which put it into effect. Now anyone, Jew or Gentile who trusts in Yeshua, becomes a covenant partner in ADONAI's New Covenant with Israel.

Here is the third Scripture confirming that Yeshua's followers today are *kohanim*: *11 "Therefore, keep in mind that once you—Gentiles in the flesh—were called "uncircumcision" by those called "circumcision" (which is performed on flesh by hand). 12 At that time you were separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Messiah Yeshua, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah"* (Ephesians 2:11-13 TLV). Every Gentile who does not know Yeshua is separate from Messiah, not a part of the commonwealth of Israel and not knowing about the covenants of promise. All of us Messianic Gentiles were like that at one time. We didn't know Yeshua. But now that we have trusted in Him, we have been brought near by His blood and are a part of the commonwealth of Israel and the knowledge that the covenants of promise are for us. Is there any covenant ADONAI has made without promises? No, every one of them has promises. The one distinction that we would make is that the covenant ADONAI made with Abraham was made with him and his descendants only, an eternal covenant promising the Land of Israel to the Jews.

The Covenant at Sinai, a covenant of promise, was made with Israel, but ADONAI made provisions for other people to be a part of it. He said that "there would be one law for both the native born and the *ger*, the stranger that sojourned with Israel. If you want Scriptural evidence, you can check out these verses: Exodus 12:49, Leviticus 16:29, Leviticus 18:26 and Numbers 15:15-16; 29. The New Covenant described in Jeremiah 31, also a covenant of promise, was also made with Israel. Gentiles who have trusted in Yeshua are a part of that covenant as *gerim*, sojourners with Israel. Thus far through three Scriptures, Exodus 19, Jeremiah 31 and Ephesians 2, we have established that Gentile followers of Yeshua are

called to be His *kohanim*, ordinary priests under our great High Priest, *Yeshua HaKohen Gadol*.

The fourth and final Scripture is given to us by *Shimon Kefa*, Simon Peter: 9 “*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*” (1Peter 2:9 TLV). Who is the chosen people? It is Israel. ADONAI chose Israel. *Kefa* wrote this to his kinsmen who had been scattered in the diaspora, the dispersion of the Jews. We see this in chapter 1: *1 Peter, an emissary of Messiah Yeshua, To the sojourners of the Diaspora in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia—* (1Peter 1:1 TLV). *Kefa* was the emissary to the Jews just as *Sha’ul* was to the Gentiles. He was writing to Messianic Jews, Jews who had trusted *Yeshua*. But, his words also apply today to anyone who has trusted *Yeshua* and either is (Messianic Jews) or has become (Gentiles) a part of the Commonwealth of Israel. The point is that we are: *a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession*, *Yeshua’s* spiritual priesthood and not a natural priesthood. We are not priests in the way that the Cohens and Kahns and Kaplans and Katz’s are, actual descendants of Aaron. But some of them today are also Messianic Jews and a royal priesthood in the same sense that we are. All of us are functionally priests as followers of *Yeshua*, priests without a Temple, yet still called to minister.

The Hebrew word *kohen* means “to serve.” The Hebrew root is the word *ken* meaning “yes” or “proper.” *Kohen* is also rooted in the word *ktivun* which means “to direct.” A *kohen* is one who directs himself and others in the proper service of ADONAI. As individual followers of *Yeshua*, have we really understood what *Shimon Kefa* has told us in these verses? Essentially, he said that we are all called to serve ADONAI as ministers. As *kohanim* we are called to be holy, set apart for service to *Yeshua* our High Priest and to ADONAI our Father. As *kohanim* we must have love and show love not only to our people Israel, but to every person. We are all called to promote peace, peace in personal relations and universal peace for all mankind. We are called to be kind and giving. We are to bring joy to others. We are to bring blessings to people. While every follower of *Yeshua* does not pronounce the *Birkat HaKohanim*, the High Priestly blessing, each of us is charged to bring blessings to those around us. We are called to be diligent in our service of ADONAI. We are to be zealous in sharing *Yeshua* and in defense of *Yeshua*. We are called to help each other. A spiritual *kohen* is called to be a spiritual provider and not just a spiritual consumer.

Our *parasha* today, *Parasha Emor* is mostly about the ways that *kohanim*, the descendants of Aaron, could be clean and unclean. There is a spiritual parallel in it for us as spiritual *kohanim* of *Yeshua*. We are commanded to be clean before Him, spiritually clean. This means that we must strive to constantly be in a state of cleanness before Him, but quickly repent and seek His forgiveness any time that we stray into uncleanness. Do we as followers of *Yeshua* really understand the magnitude of our calling? We are called to be holy, set apart for Him. Let it sink in. Every individual follower of *Yeshua* has been called to serve Him as a *kohen*! Revival begins with you! *Shabbat shalom!*