



Parasha Emor

May 2, 2026

Torah: Leviticus 21:1-24:23

Haftarah: Ezekiel 44:15-31

Shlichim: Romans 11:16-23

Shabbat shalom, Mishpacha! Our *Torah* portion 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 contain *mitzvot* regarding the *kohanim* (priests) and their holiness, including separating themselves from unclean things for ADONAI. The concept of separating from unclean things also has a spiritual application for Yeshua’s followers, though not the specific things in this *parasha*. Without a Temple, even the Jews today who are descendants of the *kohanim* cannot perform them. But under the New Covenant, we, who are followers of the High Priest Yeshua, are called to be clean because we are His *kohanim*. Each of us, Jew and Gentile alike, is called to be a priest before ADONAI (1 Peter 2:1-9).

To fulfill that calling, we must understand and obey His instructions. To understand why it’s important that we follow the *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 the *Torah* is not just Law. It is ADONAI’s teaching and instruction that we must have to be effective *kohanim*. And in learning *Torah*, whether from Exodus, Matthew, or any other book of 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 last week’s *parasha*, 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). His words were addressed to Israel, the nation He called to be priests to the nations. Jews and Gentiles who have trusted Yeshua and entered the New Covenant are part of Israel and are called to holiness. We cannot be Yeshua’s followers on our own terms, but only on His. And we have to learn how to follow Him.

Included in Parasha Emor is the one chapter that lists all the *Moedim* together. We spent some time last *Shabbat* discussing the first of them, the weekly *Shabbat*. ADONAI told us that we are to observe the weekly *Shabbat* wherever we live, whether inside or outside *Eretz Yisra'el*, the Land of Israel. He said: 3 ...”*it is a Shabbat to Adonai in all your dwellings*”. (Leviticus 23:3c TLV). In other words, wherever you live, the seventh day is a Sabbath to ADONAI.

Passover comes next in the list, but it was not to be celebrated just anywhere, not it or any of the other *Moadim* listed after it. Every other festival, listed in order, was to be observed annually, but only in Israel, and required both the Tabernacle (and later the Temple) and the Levitical priesthood for its observance. We, the followers of Yeshua in the United States today, are not commanded by ADONAI to observe these other festivals, but as His Messianic followers, we choose to commemorate them, looking forward to their restoration under King Yeshua. ADONAI will require it in the future, and the Prophet Zechariah prophesied that in the *olam habah*, the world to come, there would be a penalty for not going to Jerusalem for the harvest festival *Sukkot* (Zechariah 14:17). We know Passover was only to be observed in Israel because while Israel was still in Egypt, Moses said: 25 “*When you come into the land which Adonai will give you as He has promised, you are to keep this ceremony.*” (Exodus 12:25 TLV) (also Exodus 13:5 [*Pesach*], Numbers 15:2-3 [*Moadim*], Leviticus 23:10 [*Bikkurim* and *Shavuot*], and Deuteronomy 16:5-6 [*Pesach*]). Leviticus 23 also shows that the Temple and the Levitical Priesthood are required because sacrifices were to be offered. This means that our celebrations of *Pesach* and the other *Moadim* here in Thomasville, Georgia, are remembrances of them, not their observance according to the commandment.

ADONAI said: 5 “*During the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, is ADONAI’s Passover.*” (Leviticus 23:5 TLV). On the afternoon of April 1, 2026 (*Nisan* 14, 5786), the time of Passover occurred. That brief afternoon period was when the lambs were to be slain, and it also marked the time when Yeshua died on the cross for us. As the sun went down, April 1st remained on the Gregorian Calendar, but the Hebrew calendar shifted to *Nisan* 15. Leviticus 23 continues: 6 “*On the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Matzot to Adonai. For seven days you are to eat matzah. 7 On the first day you are to have a holy convocation, and you shall do no regular work.*” (Leviticus 23:6-7 TLV). On the evening of April 1st, we held a holy convocation here in the synagogue, our Passover *Seder*, and began our seven days without leaven.

Leviticus 23 continues: 9 Adonai spoke to Moses, saying: 10 “Speak to Bnei-Yisrael and tell them: When you have come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you are to bring the omer of the firstfruits of your harvest to the kohen. (Leviticus 23:9-10 TLV). Bringing the omer is also something that we cannot do today, but in Yeshua’s day, it was an offering of the firstfruits of the barley crop. Following the conclusion of the Passover Seder in the evening of Nisan 15, three men harvested three se’ah (approx. 6.5 gallons) of barley from a field near Jerusalem. It was brought to the Temple, where it was parched over a fire, ground into flour, and sifted. The finest flour was mixed with oil and frankincense and waved before ADONAI by a kohen the next day. According to our understanding, the presentation of the omer took place on the day after the Passover Seder, which was Nisan 16. 15 “Then you are to count from the morrow after the Shabbat, from the day that you brought the omer of the wave offering, seven complete Shabbatot.” (Leviticus 23:15 TLV). Seven complete Sabbaths is 7 X 7, or 49 days. 16 “Until the morrow after the seventh Shabbat you are to count fifty days, and then present a new grain offering to Adonai. 17 You are to bring out of your houses two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two tenths of an ephah of fine flour. They are to be baked with hametz as firstfruits to Adonai.” (Leviticus 23:16-17 TLV). The 50th day is Shavuot, the Festival of Weeks, and we bring two ceremonial loaves of leavened bread as a wave offering to ADONAI during our annual service.

From the perspective of Yeshua’s day, Israel began with Passover on the 14th day of Nisan. The lamb was slaughtered that afternoon and then cooked. The 15th day arrived in the evening, marking the beginning of the Festival of Matzot, Unleavened Bread. Matzah was to be eaten for seven days. The 15th of Nisan was also a holy convocation, a Shabbat, on which the Seder was celebrated, and the פסח Pesach lamb was eaten during the festival meal. ADONAI said that an offering was to be brought to Him. He told Moses: 10 “Speak to Bnei-Yisrael and tell them: When you have come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest (**barley**), then you are to bring the omer of the firstfruits of your harvest to the kohen.” (Leviticus 23:10 TLV). The Hebrew is אֶת עֹמֶר et omer, the sheaf. The grain of a sheaf of barley was ground and presented as a meal offering. 11 He is to wave the omer before Adonai, to be accepted for you. On the morrow after the Shabbat, the kohen is to wave it. 15 “Then you are to count from the morrow after the Shabbat, from the day that you brought the omer of the wave offering, seven complete Shabbatot. (Leviticus 23:11-12 TLV). A sheaf of barley was brought from the barley harvest, which ripened at this time of year. The question is, to which Shabbat

is ADONAI referring regarding the beginning of the count of seven complete *Shabbatot*, seven complete weeks?

Today is day 30 of our counting, and we are just 20 days away from the 50th day and our *Shavuot* celebration. The *Torah* does not instruct us to count the *omer*. That is a *Talmudic* command, followed by those who accept the authority of the *Talmud*. We do not recognize its authority, but we may use the word *omer* as a method of counting, understanding that it originates from the *Talmud*. However, we should be cautious about assigning any spiritual significance to the *omer* or any of the observances associated with it, as none is given in the Scripture. Similarly, Rabbinic Judaism changed the day of Passover and the seven days of Unleavened Bread into the “Eight Days of Passover,” and seeing this in our calendars can be confusing.

Leviticus 23 instructs us how to count the days to *Shavuot*, but different groups choose to do it differently, which can lead to *Shavuot* being celebrated on a different day. Yeshua has given each leader the authority to determine how to interpret the *Torah*. So, how are we at *Beit Shalom* to count seven full weeks beginning the day after the *Shabbat*, the day on which the *kohenim* brought the barley offering? Seven full weeks is 49 days, with the 50th day being *Shavuot*. Here, we count using the method used in Rabbinic Judaism, the ancient Pharisaic way, because, based on the evidence, we believe it is the correct way to count. That is the way you will find it on our calendars. Some within Messianic Judaism count differently, but most follow this approach. We count this way because we believe the evidence for it outweighs the evidence for the other ways of counting.

The *Torah* says: “You are to count from the day after the *Shabbat*, from the day that you brought the *omer* of the wave offering.” We all agree that it is the day after a *Shabbat*, but we don’t agree on which *Shabbat* is being referenced. The question is, “Which is the *Shabbat* on which the wave offering of barley was brought?” There are several to choose from. The 15th of *Nisan*, the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, is a Sabbath, and the seventh day of the week is also a Sabbath. After which of these Sabbaths do we begin our counting?

We believe we start counting after the first one, the first Sabbath of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which always falls on the 15th of *Nisan* (*Nisan* 21, the 7th day is also a Sabbath). Some others begin their count the day after the weekly Sabbath. Counting as we

do, starting from the specific date of *Nisan* 16, the day after the first Sabbath of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the 50th day can fall on any of the seven days of the week, but always on the specific date of *Sivan* 6. However, counting from the day after the weekly Sabbath, the 50th day always falls on a Sunday.

Three ancient groups held different opinions about when the count was to begin. Counting from the day after the weekly *Shabbat*, Sunday, the first day of the week, is generally attributed to the Sadducees. This may not be entirely correct because there were at least two Sadducee factions. In Yeshua's day, one of them was a political group called the Boethusians, a branch of the Sadducees founded by Simon ben Boethus, a High Priest appointed by Herod the Great in 24 BCE. They were not in political step with the other Sadducees and were loyal to Herod and his descendants. In the Gospels, the Boethusian Sadducees were referred to as Herodians. Several verses refer to them (Matthew 22:16, Mark 3:6, 8:15, and 12:13). One of these references is about Yeshua's last week in Jerusalem: *6 The Pharisees went out right away with the Herodians and began plotting against Him, how they might destroy Him.* (Mark 3:6 TLV). These Herodians were Sadducees, specifically the Boethusian branch. It is said that they were so rabid about counting from Sunday that they would hire false witnesses to trick the Pharisees into believing the new moon had been sighted. They and the Pharisees were unlikely bedfellows, given their differing approaches to counting. However, their collaboration was intended to secure Yeshua's conviction. Another group that had a different opinion on when to begin counting was the sect from Qumran, the writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls. They understood the Sabbath to refer to the weekly Sabbath following the last day of Unleavened Bread, that is, the second weekly Sabbath after Passover. They counted similarly to the Boethusians, though a week later. The third group, the Pharisees, stated that the omer was to be waved on *Nisan* 16, the day after the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which fell on the 15th of *Nisan*, the first *Shabbat* of the festival.

We choose to follow the Pharisees' method. But why? One reason is the way the Septuagint translates Leviticus 23. The Greek language translation of the *Tanakh* says: *(10) "Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say to them, When ye shall enter into the land which I give you, and reap the harvest of it, then shall you bring a sheaf, the first-fruits of your harvest, to the priest; (11) and he shall lift up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. On the morrow of the first day, the priest shall lift it up"* (Leviticus 23:10-11 LXX). They used

“first day” in place of *Shabbat*, which was apparently their understanding. “On the morrow of the first day” refers to *Nisan 16*, the day after the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which occurs on *Nisan 15*. We note that the Septuagint was written more than 200 years before Yeshua’s day on the cross, and it appears that this method was in use long, long before the Sadducees began disputing in the 1st century. The Septuagint also translates the Hebrew word *Shabbatot* as weeks. Although the Hebrew word is *Shabbatot*, meaning “Sabbaths,” it was to be understood as “weeks.” The Septuagint clearly states that the count begins on *Nisan 16*, the morrow after the *Shabbat* on the 15th.

But there is a second reason that we count in this manner. The Jewish historian Josephus (*Mattityahu ben Yosef*) also wrote about *Shavuot*: “.....And we do celebrate this Passover in companies, leaving nothing of what we sacrifice till the day following. The feast of Unleavened Bread succeeds that of the Passover, and falls on the fifteenth day of the month, and continues seven days, wherein they feed on unleavened bread; on every one of which days two bulls are killed, and one ram, and seven lambs. Now these lambs are entirely burnt, besides the kid of the goats which is added to all the rest, for sins; for is intended as a feast for the priest on every one of those days. But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them” (Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 3, Chapter 10, Section 5). Josephus verifies that the fruit of the earth, the *omer* of barley, was waved on the sixteenth day of *Nisan*, the second day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This also means that the count toward *Shavuot* began on that day, the day after the first special *Shabbat* of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This is our evidence, which we consider conclusive. However, we don’t wish to dispute about it, but to be in fellowship with those who may celebrate differently.

Each of the events which ADONAI described in Leviticus chapter 23 is called His *Moedim*, His designated times, *miqra’ei kodesh*, holy convocations. There are seven, and the first is the weekly *Shabbat*. The remaining six are: *Matzot* (Unleavened Bread), *Shavuot* (Pentecost), *Yom Teruah* (Trumpets/*Rosh Hashanah*), *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), *Sukkot* (Tabernacles), and *Shemini Atzeret* (Eighth Day of Assembly). If each of these seven *moedim* is a holy convocation, a time of assembling before ADONAI, why did He single out the three *Regalim* of *Matzot*, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*, commanding all Israelite males to attend them? It wasn’t just a suggestion: 16 “*Three times a year all your males are to appear before Adonai*

your God in the place He chooses—at the Feast of Matzot, the Feast of Shavuot, and the Feast of Sukkot. No one should appear before Adonai empty-handed— 17 the gift of each man’s hand according to the blessing Adonai your God has given you” (Deuteronomy 16:16-17 TLV).

He chose these three because they are the unfolding picture He was revealing to Israel. When Israel celebrated Passover in the wilderness and then, forty years later, in the land of Israel, all they knew was the Egyptian Passover. Their *seder* included only the information revealing that ADONAI had redeemed Israel with His outstretched arm from Pharaoh and his slavery, and that He caused the angel of death to pass over them because of the blood of an innocent lamb painted on their doorposts. Year after year, Israel celebrated *Pesach*, remembering Egypt, and celebrating as if they had been there. What Israel didn’t know was that they were rehearsing for a Passover yet to come. The earlier Passovers were rehearsals, and in due time, ADONAI sent His son Yeshua to be our Passover lamb, the sinless lamb whose blood paid the price for our sins. At that moment, when Yeshua died on the cross, the rehearsals ceased, and the true event commenced. The Passover we celebrated together 30 days ago embodied elements from both the Egyptian Passover and Yeshua’s last Passover. While the Egyptian Passover foreshadowed the future Passover, in which ADONAI would redeem us from the slavery of sin through the blood of His own Son, the Passover we commemorate now is a fulfillment of that first Passover in Egypt. But for us, it is only a commemoration, not an observance, because it can be fully observed only in Jerusalem, with a Temple and a Levitical priesthood to offer the sacrifices. The blood of lambs, bulls, and goats covered Israel’s sins in those former days, but now, Yeshua’s spotless blood has put our sins away from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

Shavuot is also intimately tied to the first Passover in Egypt. Jewish tradition tells us that ADONAI gave the *Torah* on Mount Sinai during *Shavuot*. The *Torah* doesn’t specifically mention that it was *Shavuot*, but the 50th day after Passover occurred at Mount Sinai, and I believe it was. Exodus 19 states that it was in the third month after Israel left Egypt, and *Shavuot* would fall within that month. At Sinai, ADONAI essentially stated, “If you keep My covenant, I will take you to be My people, and I will make you a nation of priests” (Exodus 19:6-7). All Israel answered with one voice, accepting ADONAI’s gracious offer: “Everything you say, we will do” (Exodus 19:8). Gracious is the appropriate word because Israel’s salvation from Egypt was purely due to His grace. Israel did nothing to deserve deliverance, but because of ADONAI’s love for them and His commitment to Abraham, He delivered them.

And His giving of the *Torah* on Mount Sinai on *Shavuot* allowed Israel to live under His loving protection.

At Sinai, ADONAI wrote His *Torah* on tablets of stone and gave Israel other commands to instruct them on how to relate to Him and how to deal with their sin. In the wilderness, Israel rebelled against Him and had to endure 40 years in a dry and harsh land when they could have reached *Eretz Yisra'el* in just a few months. And Israel continued to rebel against ADONAI. During the time of the Judges, they repeatedly rebelled, and He had to consistently send a redeemer-judge to rescue them. Through the next hundreds of years, Israel continually rebelled against Him, until finally, He brought His punishment upon them. First, the Kingdom of Israel in the north was conquered and taken captive by Assyria. Then, a little over a hundred years later, the southern Kingdom of Judah was conquered and taken captive by Babylon.

Under the inspiration of the *Ruach Kodesh*, Jeremiah foretold the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:30-32 TLV). The rabbis don't teach about the New Covenant, just as they don't teach about Isaiah 53. However, both Scriptures convey what ADONAI promised Israel. Through Jeremiah, ADONAI told of a New Covenant in the days to come. And when the time came, He initiated it through the blood of His Son, Yeshua, as is vividly pictured in Isaiah 53. And He inscribed His Laws, His *Torah*, upon our hearts when we embraced Yeshua, even as the *Ruach Kodesh* spiritually circumcised our hearts.

Shavuot, one of the *Regalim*, is an important festival because it was at this time, about 10 days after Yeshua ascended to the Father, that the *Ruach Kodesh* fell upon the believers who had gathered for the festival. That outpouring of the Spirit was the fulfillment of the first *Shavuot* at Mount Sinai and the writing of the *Torah* on hearts, as described in Jeremiah 31. At Sinai, the *Torah* had been written on stone tablets, but in Jerusalem in the 1st century, it was written on the hearts of men and women who had accepted Yeshua's sacrificial blood as payment for their sins. The *Shavuot* at Mount Sinai was a rehearsal, and *Shavuot* in Jerusalem in the 1st century was its fulfillment.

The Spring Festivals of ADONAI, *Chag HaMatzot* (including *Pesach*) and *Chag HaShavuot*, have been fulfilled by Yeshua, but the three Fall Festivals remain unfulfilled. Year after year, we continue to rehearse them: *Yom Teruah* (*Rosh Hashanah*), *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), and *Chag HaSukkot* (the Festival of Tabernacles). Thus far, ADONAI is

fulfilling them in the order in which He gave them, and we look forward to *Yom Teruah*, the Day of Trumpets, also known as *Rosh Hashanah*, to be fulfilled next. It may be on a future *Rosh Hashanah* that Yeshua will return as *Melekh Mashiach*, King Messiah, coming on the clouds to gather us as *Sha'ul* told us in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. We don't know the day, but we do know that He will return on the day that the last *shofar* is sounded in heaven. We know that we will join Him this way because that is the way He left the earth and ascended to His Father. 9 ...—*He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 While they were staring into heaven as He went up, suddenly two men stood with them in white clothing. 11 They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you keep standing here staring into heaven? This Yeshua, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:9b-11 TLV). He ascended into the clouds and He will return in the clouds for us! We pray that His coming will be soon!

What takes place with the fulfillment of *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot* is a teaching for other days. Why did ADONAI include *Sukkot* with the Festivals of *Matzot* and *Shavuot* in the *Regalim*, the three festivals He commanded Israel to attend? It is because *Sukkot* is a picture of the coming eternal reign of Messiah Yeshua. *Pesach* and its fulfillment through Yeshua gave us the way to be in right-standing before ADONAI. *Shavuot* reminds us of the written *Torah*, while its fulfillment in the *B'rit Chadasha*, the New Covenant, enables the *Torah* to be inscribed on our hearts, even as we are filled with the *Ruach Kodesh*. The Holy Spirit, given on that 1st-century *Shavuot* and given to us today, helps us live out our salvation before ADONAI. And the hope of *Sukkot*, a picture of the coming eternal reign of Yeshua, encourages us to persevere as we await His return to defeat his enemies and rule and reign over us from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:1-3). Today, the nation of Israel is experiencing the turmoil of war, part of the birth pangs of the Messiah (Matthew 24:4-8), an event Yeshua spoke of the day before He died. The *Shavuot* of 2026 in Israel will be a day marred by war. 6 *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem— "May those who love you be at peace! 7 May there be shalom within your walls— quietness within your palaces"* (Psalm 122:6-7 TLV). *Shabbat shalom!*