

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



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Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary
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21 The LORD said to Moses: Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them:

None shall defile himself for any [dead] person among his kin, ²except for the relatives that are closest to him: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother; ³also for a virgin sister, close to him because she has not married, for her he may defile himself. ⁴But he shall not defile himself as a kinsman by marriage, and so profane himself.

כא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמַר
אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם
לֹא יִטְמָא בְּעַמּוּיוֹ: ² כִּי אִם־לְשֹׂארוֹ
הַקָּרֵב אֵלָיו לְאִמּוֹ וּלְאָבִיו וּלְבָנוֹ וּלְבִתּוֹ
וּלְאָחִיו: ³ וְלְאָחֹתוֹ הַבְּתוּלָה הַקְּרוּבָה
אֵלָיו אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הִיְתָה לְאִישׁ לָהּ יִטְמָא:
לֹא יִטְמָא בְּעַל בְּעַמּוּיוֹ לְהַחֲלוֹ: ⁴

The Pursuit of Holiness (continued)

LAWS GOVERNING THE PRIESTHOOD (21:1–22:33)

The laws of chapters 21 and 22 are directed specifically to the priesthood, not to the Israelite people as a whole.

RESTRICTIONS AND LIMITATIONS
(21:1–24)

1–4. In these verses, the social context is the clan. An ordinary priest may not become defiled by contact with the dead of his clan, but he may

be defiled for those members of his clan who are most closely related to him. Attending to the burial of clan relatives was a traditional duty.

a virgin sister, close to him because she has not married The sister is “close” until she marries and goes to live with her husband’s family. After that, there are others who will attend to her burial.

a kinsman by marriage According to the

This *parashah* lives up to the book’s alternative Hebrew title *Torat Kohanim*, the priests’ manual. It focuses on special regulations of *kohanim* and then on the ritual aspects of the sacred calendar. The previous *parashah* describes the Israelites as being set apart from other nations, called on to attain holiness through their distinctive lifestyle. This *parashah* sets the *kohanim* apart from other Israelites by means of symbolic obligations, restrictions, and abstentions in their lives. As the Israelites are to represent the God-oriented life to the nations of the world, the *kohanim* are to represent a maximal level of devotion to God for their fellow Israelites. Every society needs a core of people who live by a more demanding code, to set an example for others of what is possible.

CHAPTER 21

1. the priests, the sons of Aaron Declare

these rules to the *kohanim* because they are descendants of Aaron. Remind them that their distinctiveness is based on their forebears, not on their own merit. And let them pass on to their children the importance of that lineage and the obligation to be worthy of it (Hirsch). “Tell the *kohanim* to be sons of Aaron in deed and not only in descent, pursuers of peace and reconciliation as Aaron was” (Jacob Isaac of Lublin).

As public figures, the *kohanim* must be role models of dealing with grief and loss, balancing their personal sorrow with their commitment to serving the people and the obligation to accept death as part of God’s plan for the world. A *kohen* may willingly acquire ritual impurity (*tum·ah*) by coming into contact with the dead body of a family member, for he owes his priestly status to his family of origin. He may not do so, however, for the corpse of a friend or for a relative by marriage.

HALAKHAH L’MA’ASEH

21:2. except for the relatives The Sages add that a *kohen* is required to defile himself for burying his deceased wife (BT Yev. 22b).

⁵They shall not shave smooth any part of their heads, or cut the side-growth of their beards, or make gashes in their flesh. ⁶They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God; for they offer the LORD's gifts, the food of their God, and so must be holy.

⁷They shall not marry a woman defiled by harlotry, nor shall they marry one divorced from her husband. For they are holy to their God ⁸and you must treat them as holy, since they offer the food of your God; they shall be holy to you, for I the LORD who sanctify you am holy.

⁹When the daughter of a priest defiles herself through harlotry, it is her father whom she defiles; she shall be put to the fire.

¹⁰The priest who is exalted above his fellows, on whose head the anointing oil has been

5 לֹא־יִקְרַחַה יִקְרָחוּ קְרָחַה בְּרֹאשָׁם וּפְאֵת זָקְנָם לֹא יִגְלְחוּ וּבְבִשְׂרָם לֹא יִשְׂרְטוּ שְׂרֻטָּת: 6 קֹדְשִׁים יִהְיוּ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַחְלְלוּ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי אֶת־אֲשֵׁי יְהוָה לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הֵם מִקְרִיבִם וְהָיוּ קֹדֶשׁ: 7 אִשָּׁה זֹנָה וַחֲלָלָה לֹא יִקְחוּ וְאִשָּׁה גְרוּשָׁה מֵאִשָּׁה לֹא יִקְחוּ כִּי־קֹדֶשׁ הוּא לֵאלֹהֵיו: 8 וְקִדְשָׁתוּ כִּי־אֶת־לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיךָ הוּא מִקְרִיב קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה־לְךָ כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה מִקְדְּשֵׁכֶם:

9 וּבַת אִישׁ כֹּהֵן כִּי תַחַל לְזִנוֹת אֶת־אֲבִיהָ הִיא מְחַלְלַת בָּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרַף: 10 וְהַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל מֵאֲחָיו אֲשֶׁר־יוֹצֵק עַל־רֵאשׁוֹ | שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה וּמֵלֵא אֶת־יָדוֹ

Torah, a priest is not permitted to attend to the burial of his wife. (Although she is related to him through marriage, she is not his blood relative. Rabbinic law, however, permits this.)

5. They shall not shave smooth Shaving the hair and pulling it out were rites of mourning in ancient Canaan that the Torah and its followers sought to prevent.

6. the food of their God Offerings to God, often called “food” (*lehem*), are considered food for God in a symbolic sense.

7. defiled by harlotry According to Rab-

binic interpretation, the Hebrew term for “harlot” (*zonah*) refers to a woman habitually given to harlotry not to one who may have lapsed on a particular occasion.

9. The behavior of a priest's daughter reflects on her father's sacred office. Death by fire indicates the seriousness of the offense.

10. The priest who is exalted above his fellows This is the full title of the High Priest, whose distinction derives from the facts that he is the only priest to be anointed with the sacred oil and that he wears unique vestments.

8. you must treat them as holy Rabbis and cantors are no different from other Jews. They have no special powers; no obligations devolve on them that do not apply to all Jews. “Ten shoemakers can make a *minyan* but nine rabbis can't.” Nonetheless, they are considered *k'lei kodesh*—“instruments of holiness”—

because, through their knowledge and teaching and by life, character, and commitments they show the way to a life of holiness.

9. When the daughter of a priest defiles herself To mitigate the severity of this law, the Sages made it apply only to a married daughter who had committed adultery.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

21:7. nor shall they marry one divorced Traditional Jewish law prohibits a *kohen* from marrying a divorcée or a convert (S.A. E.H. 6:1). Nevertheless, if such a marriage took place, the marriage is considered valid and the children are legitimate, although they do not inherit their father's priestly status. Because we no longer consider divorced women as impaired, CJLS has ruled to allow such marriages ab initio without any loss of priestly status for the man or his children.

poured and who has been ordained to wear the vestments, shall not bare his head or rend his vestments. ¹¹He shall not go in where there is any dead body; he shall not defile himself even for his father or mother. ¹²He shall not go outside the sanctuary and profane the sanctuary of his God, for upon him is the distinction of the anointing oil of his God, Mine the LORD's. ¹³He may marry only a woman who is a virgin. ¹⁴A widow, or a divorced woman, or one who is degraded by harlotry—such he may not marry. Only a virgin of his own kin may he take to wife—¹⁵that he may not profane his offspring among his kin, for I the LORD have sanctified him.

¹⁶The LORD spoke further to Moses: ¹⁷Speak to Aaron and say: No man of your offspring throughout the ages who has a defect shall be qualified to offer the food of his God. ¹⁸No one at all who has a defect shall be qualified: no man who is blind, or lame, or has a limb too short

לְלִבְשׁ אֶת־הַבְּגָדִים אֶת־רֵאשׁוֹ לֹא יִפְרֹעַ וּבִגְדָיו לֹא יִפְרֹם: ¹¹ וְעַל כָּל־נִפְשׁוֹת מֵת לֹא יָבֵא לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ לֹא יִטְמָא: ¹² וּמִן־הַמִּקְדָּשׁ לֹא יֵצֵא וְלֹא יַחַלֵּל אֶת מִקְדָּשׁ אֱלֹהָיו כִּי נֹזֵר שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת אֱלֹהָיו עָלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה: ¹³ וְהוּא אִשָּׁה בְּתוּלִיָּה יִקַּח: ¹⁴ אֲלִמְנָה וּגְרוּשָׁה וַחֲלָלָה זֹנֶה אֶת־אֶלְהָ לֹא יִקַּח כִּי אִם־בְּתוּלָה מִעַמּוֹ יִקַּח אִשָּׁה: ¹⁵ וְלֹא־יַחַלֵּל זָרְעוֹ בְּעַמּוֹ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מִקְדָּשׁוֹ: פ

¹⁶ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ¹⁷ דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר אִישׁ מִזֶּרְעֶךָ לְדוֹרָתָם אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בוֹ מוֹם לֹא יִקְרָב לְהִקְרִיב לַחֶם אֱלֹהָיו: ¹⁸ כִּי כָל־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בוֹ מוֹם לֹא יִקְרָב אִישׁ עוֹר אוֹ פֶּסַח אוֹ חָרָם אוֹ

shall not bare his head or rend his vestments

These are practices associated with mourning.

11. He shall not go in where there is any dead body Or, “He shall not enter [anywhere] on account of a dead body,” namely, to attend to a dead body.

he shall not defile himself even for his father or mother The Hebrew word order is inverted for emphasis: “Even for his father or mother he shall not defile himself.”

12. He shall not go outside the sanctuary The High Priest may not leave the sanctuary even for the purpose of attending to the burial of close

relatives, including his own parents. He could never purify himself so completely as to avoid the danger of contaminating the Holy of Holies.

13–14. Only the High Priest must marry a virgin from a priestly family. If he were to marry outside the priestly kinship, his offspring would be unfit to serve as priests.

17. Priests who are physically unsound are deprived only of the right to officiate in the sacrificial system. They are still entitled to receive their various gratuities, because it is through no fault of their own that they suffer from such defects.

17–23. The reader may be troubled by these rules disqualifying physically handicapped *kohanim* from officiating in public. Perhaps their disfigurements would distract the worshipers from concentrating on the ritual and, like the offering of the blemished animal, would compromise the sanctuary's image as a place of perfection reflecting God's perfection (cf. Lev. 22:21–25, where similar language is used for the animals brought to the altar). In later texts, in the Psalms and the prophets, the Bible emphasizes that the broken in body and spirit, because they have been

cured of the sin of arrogance, are specially welcome before God. “True sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; / God, You will not despise / a contrite and crushed heart” (Ps. 51:19).

Today we might well consider the religious institution that is willing to admit its own imperfections and is willing to engage physically handicapped spiritual leaders as being better able to welcome worshipers who are painfully aware of their own physical or emotional imperfections. Many congregations have made special efforts to provide access for the handicapped.

or too long; ¹⁹no man who has a broken leg or a broken arm; ²⁰or who is a hunchback, or a dwarf, or who has a growth in his eye, or who has a boil-scar, or scurvy, or crushed testes. ²¹No man among the offspring of Aaron the priest who has a defect shall be qualified to offer the LORD's gift; having a defect, he shall not be qualified to offer the food of his God. ²²He may eat of the food of his God, of the most holy as well as of the holy; ²³but he shall not enter behind the curtain or come near the altar, for he has a defect. He shall not profane these places sacred to Me, for I the LORD have sanctified them.

²⁴Thus Moses spoke to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites.

22 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²Instruct Aaron and his sons to be scrupulous about the sacred donations that the Israelite people consecrate to Me, lest they profane My holy name, Mine the LORD's. ³Say to them:

Throughout the ages, if any man among your offspring, while in a state of impurity, partakes of any sacred donation that the Israelite people may consecrate to the LORD, that person shall be cut off from before Me: I am the LORD. ⁴No man of Aaron's offspring who has an eruption or a discharge shall eat of the sacred donations

19. Normally, such injuries would be permanent because broken limbs were not set properly in ancient times.

22. A physically defective priest was forbidden to officiate but was not denied his benefits.

24. In stating that these laws are addressed to all the Israelites, the spirit of inclusiveness so characteristic of the Holiness Code is retained, even though this chapter deals with matters of specific concern to the priesthood.

SACRED DONATIONS (22:1-33)

2. Aaron and his sons must separate themselves from the sacrifices at certain necessary times. The verses that follow provide the details of what such avoidance entails.

שָׂרוּעַ: ¹⁹ אוֹ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יְהִיָּה בּוֹ שִׁבְרֵ רֶגֶל אוֹ שִׁבְרֵ יָד: ²⁰ אוֹ-גִבָּן אוֹ-דָק אוֹ תְּבַלְלַל בְּעֵינָיו אוֹ גֵּרֵב אוֹ יִלְפֶּת אוֹ מְרוּחַ אֲשֶׁר: ²¹ כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ מוּם מִזֶּרַע אֲהָרֹן הַכֹּהֵן לֹא יִגַּשׁ לְהִקְרִיב אֶת-אֲשֵׁי יְהוָה מוּם בּוֹ אֶת לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיו לֹא יִגַּשׁ לְהִקְרִיב: ²² לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיו מִקְדָּשֵׁי הַקְּדוּשִׁים וּמִן-הַקְּדוּשִׁים יֹאכֵל: ²³ אָךְ אֶל-הַפְּרֻכֹּת לֹא יָבֹא וְאֶל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא יִגַּשׁ כִּי-מוּם בּוֹ וְלֹא יַחֲלֹל אֶת-מִקְדָּשָׁי כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מִקְדָּשָׁם: ²⁴ וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אֲהֲרֹן וְאֶל-בָּנָיו וְאֶל-כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ

כב וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ² דַּבֵּר אֶל-אֲהֲרֹן וְאֶל-בָּנָיו וַיְנַזְרוּ מִקְדָּשֵׁי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יַחֲלֹלוּ אֶת-שֵׁם קְדוֹשֵׁי אֲשֶׁר הֵם מִקְדָּשִׁים לִי אֲנִי יְהוָה: ³ אָמַר אֲלֵהֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם כָּל-אִישׁ | אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרַב מִכָּל-זֶרַעְכֶם אֶל-הַקְּדוּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר יִקְדִּישׁוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לַיהוָה וְטָמְאָתוּ עָלָיו וְנִכְרַתָּהּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מִלִּפְנֵי אֲנִי יְהוָה: ⁴ אִישׁ אִישׁ מִזֶּרַע אֲהֲרֹן וְהוּא צְרוּעַ אוֹ זָב

3. partakes of any sacred donation Impure priests are not allowed to partake of the consecrated offerings lest they defile them.

that person shall be cut off Normally, the phrase refers to being cut off from one's kin or people. Here, the idea is that God directly objects to the nearness of impure priests and does not wish them to stand in His presence.

I am the LORD This refrain in the Holiness Code often concludes a section of laws or commandments.

4. The final purification of an afflicted priest occurs only after sacrifices are offered on the eighth day.

until he is pure. If one touches anything made impure by a corpse, or if a man has an emission of semen,⁵ or if a man touches any swarming thing by which he is made impure or any human being by whom he is made impure—whatever his impurity—⁶the person who touches such shall be impure until evening and shall not eat of the sacred donations unless he has washed his body in water. ⁷As soon as the sun sets, he shall be pure; and afterward he may eat of the sacred donations, for they are his food. ⁸He shall not eat anything that died or was torn by beasts, thereby becoming impure: I am the LORD. ⁹They shall keep My charge, lest they incur guilt thereby and die for it, having committed profanation: I the LORD consecrate them.

¹⁰No lay person shall eat of the sacred donations. No bound or hired laborer of a priest shall eat of the sacred donations; ¹¹but a person who is a priest's property by purchase may eat of them; and those that are born into his household may eat of his food. ¹²If a priest's daughter marries a layman, she may not eat of the sacred gifts; ¹³but if the priest's daughter is widowed or divorced and without offspring, and is back

בְּקִדְשִׁים לֹא יֹאכַל עַד אֲשֶׁר יִטְהַר וְהִנָּגַע
בְּכָל-טִמְאֵת-נֶפֶשׁ אוֹ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-הִצֵּא מִמֶּנּוּ
שִׁכְבַת-זָרַע: ⁵ אוֹ-אִישׁ יִגַּע בְּכָל-
שְׂרָץ אֲשֶׁר יִטְמָאוּ לוֹ אוֹ בְּאָדָם אֲשֶׁר
יִטְמָאוּ לוֹ לְכָל טִמְאָתוֹ: ⁶ נֶפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר הִנָּגַע-
בּוֹ וְטִמְאָה עַד-הָעֶרֶב וְלֹא יֹאכַל מִן-
הַקִּדְשִׁים כִּי אִם-רָחַץ בְּשׂוֹר בַּמַּיִם: ⁷ וּבָא
הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְטָהַר וְאַחַר יֹאכַל מִן-הַקִּדְשִׁים
כִּי לַחֲמוֹ הוּא: ⁸ וְנִבְלָה וְטִרְפָּה לֹא יֹאכַל
לְטִמְאֵתָהּ אֲנִי יְהוָה: ⁹ וְשָׁמְרוּ אֶת-
מִשְׁמְרֹתַי וְלֹא-יִשְׂאוּ עָלֵיו חֲטָא וּמִתּוֹ בּוֹ
כִּי יַחְלִלְהוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה מִקִּדְשָׁם:
¹⁰ וְכָל-זָר לֹא-יֹאכַל קֹדֶשׁ תּוֹשֵׁב בְּהֶן
וְשָׂכִיר לֹא-יֹאכַל קֹדֶשׁ: ¹¹ וְכִהֵן כִּי-יִקְנֶה
נֶפֶשׁ קָנִין בְּסֻפּוֹ הוּא יֹאכַל בּוֹ וְיִלִּיד בֵּיתוֹ
הֵם יֹאכְלוּ בְלַחְמוֹ: ¹² וּבִת-פֶּהֶן כִּי תִהְיֶה
לְאִישׁ זָר הִוא בְּתֵרוּמַת הַקִּדְשִׁים לֹא
תֹאכַל: ¹³ וּבִת-פֶּהֶן כִּי תִהְיֶה אֶלְמָנָה
וְגֵרוּשָׁה זָרַע אֵין לָהּ וְשָׂבָה אֶל-בֵּית

5. This law concerns a person, in this case a priest, who touches another person who is in a state of impurity for any of a variety of reasons.

6. A priest who touches people or vessels that are impure but who was not initially impure himself, needs only to bathe and wait until after sunset to be restored to a pure state.

7. As soon as the sun sets Literally, “the sun having entered.” In ancient cosmology, at twilight the sun “enters” its house of the night and begins its underground journey to the east.

for they are his food It would be unfair to deprive priests of their daily bread any longer than absolutely necessary. The priests’ partaking of sacrifices was considered indispensable to the efficacy of those offerings.

8. This prohibition is extended to apply to all Israelites in Deut. 14:21.

10. lay person Hebrew: *zar*, which has the basic sense of “outsider, stranger.”

bound . . . laborer Hebrew: *toshav* (resident), which may refer to foreign residents as well. The *toshav* of a priest was not his property, but like an indentured servant.

hired laborer An employee, not a slave.

11. These are non-Israelites.

12. A priest's daughter derives the privilege of partaking of the priests' food from her father, who is responsible for her care as long as she resides in his home. If she marries outside the priesthood, she forfeits this privilege.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

22:12. a priest's daughter marries a layman Matrilineal descent transmits Jewish status, but one's tribal identity (*kohen*, *levi*, or *yisra-el*) is determined through the father. The CJLS has ruled that in those egalitarian congregations that call a *kohen* for the first *aliyah* to the Torah, the daughter of a priest may receive the *kohen's* *aliyah* even if her husband is not a *kohen*. However, children born of that union inherit the tribal identity of their father. See Comment to Num. 6:23.

in her father's house as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food. No lay person may eat of it: ¹⁴but if a man eats of a sacred donation unwittingly, he shall pay the priest for the sacred donation, adding one-fifth of its value. ¹⁵But [the priests] must not allow the Israelites to profane the sacred donations that they set aside for the LORD, ¹⁶or to incur guilt requiring a penalty payment, by eating such sacred donations: for it is I the LORD who make them sacred.

¹⁷The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁸Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the Israelite people, and say to them:

When any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers in Israel presents a burnt offering as his offering for any of the votive or any of the freewill offerings that they offer to the LORD, ¹⁹it must, to be acceptable in your favor, be a male without blemish, from cattle or sheep or goats. ²⁰You shall not offer any that has a defect, for it will not be accepted in your favor.

²¹And when a man offers, from the herd or the flock, a sacrifice of well-being to the LORD for an explicit vow or as a freewill offering, it

אָבִיָּהּ בְּנַעֲוִיָּיהָ מִלֶּחֶם אָבִיָּהּ תֹאכַל וְכַל־זֶר לֹא־יֹאכַל בּוֹ: ¹⁴ וְאִישׁ כִּי־יֹאכַל קֹדֶשׁ בְּשִׁגְגָה וְיִסַּף חֲמִשִּׁיתוֹ עָלָיו וְנָתַן לַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ: ¹⁵ וְלֹא יַחַלְלוּ אֶת־קֹדְשֵׁי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת אֲשֶׁר־יָרִימוּ לַיהוָה: ¹⁶ וְהִשְׂיֵאוּ אוֹתָם עֵן אֲשַׁמָּה בְּאֲכָלָם אֶת־קֹדְשֵׁיהֶם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מִקְדָּשָׁם: פ

¹⁷ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ¹⁸ דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו וְאֶל כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן־הַגֵּר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיב קָרְבָּנוֹ לְכָל־נִדְרֵיהֶם וּלְכָל־נִדְבוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה לְעֹלָה: ¹⁹ לְרִצְנָכֶם תָּמִים זָכָר בְּבָקָר בְּשֹׁשְׁבִים וּבַעֲזִים: ²⁰ כָּל אֲשֶׁר־בוֹ מוּם לֹא תִקְרִיבוּ כִּי־לֹא לְרִצּוֹן יִהְיֶה לָכֶם: ²¹ וְאִישׁ כִּי־יִקְרִיב זִבְח־שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה לְפִלֵּא־נִדְרָה אוֹ לְנִדְבָה בְּבָקָר אוֹ בְּעִזָּאן

14. he shall pay the priest for the sacred donation The entire payment, including the penalty of one fifth of the estimated value of the misappropriated property, is referred to as “the sacred donation” (*ha-kodesh*). Once remitted, it all became the property of the priest.

15. As the ones responsible for maintaining proper storage and accurate accounting procedures, the priests were to police themselves to prevent priests who might be so tempted from dealing in sacred donations to their own advantage.

16. who make them sacred “Them” can refer either to the priests or to the donations.

18. of the strangers in Israel Non-Israelites also donated sacrificial offerings to the God of Israel. In the ancient Near East, it was customary to pay respect to the deity of the host country.

a burnt offering as his offering for any of the votive or any of the freewill offerings The burnt offering (*olah*), the mainstay of the sacrificial system, also served as an individual sacrifice, often brought as a votive, or freewill, offering.

CHAPTER 22

18. of the strangers Non-Israelites living among the Israelites will be motivated to worship the God of Israel, and their offerings will be welcome. Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem: “Or if a foreigner who is not of Your people . . . shall hear about Your great name and . . . comes to pray toward this House, oh, hear in Your heavenly abode. . . .

Thus all the peoples of the earth will know Your name and revere You, as does Your people Israel” (1 Kings 8:41–43).

19. We are to offer God our best, not because God’s vanity requires it but because that reflects our attitude toward God and toward the offering we bring. Even if the blemished animal is larger and more valuable, it is not acceptable (Sforno). God looks for wholeness rather than monetary worth.

must, to be acceptable, be without blemish; there must be no defect in it. ²²Anything blind, or injured, or maimed, or with a wen, boil-scar, or scurvy—such you shall not offer to the LORD; you shall not put any of them on the altar as gifts to the LORD. ²³You may, however, present as a freewill offering an ox or a sheep with a limb extended or contracted; but it will not be accepted for a vow. ²⁴You shall not offer to the LORD anything [with its testes] bruised or crushed or torn or cut. You shall have no such practices in your own land, ²⁵nor shall you accept such [animals] from a foreigner for offering as food for your God, for they are mutilated, they have a defect; they shall not be accepted in your favor.

²⁶The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁷When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall stay seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as a gift to the LORD. ²⁸However, no animal from the herd or from the flock shall be slaughtered on the same day with its young.

²⁹When you sacrifice a thanksgiving offering to the LORD, sacrifice it so that it may be acceptable in your favor. ³⁰It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall not leave any of it until morning: I am the LORD.

³¹You shall faithfully observe My command-

22. There is a marked similarity between the physical defects that render a priest unfit to officiate and those that render an animal unfit for sacrifice.

23. freewill offering Because this offering is a gift to the sanctuary and is not intended for sacrifice, it need not be perfect.

תָּמִים יִהְיֶה לְרִצּוֹן כָּל־מוֹם לֹא יִהְיֶה־בּוֹ :
²² עֹרֹתָ אֹו שָׁבוֹר אֹו־חֲרוּץ אֹו־יִבְלֵת אֹו
 גָּרֵב אֹו יִלְפֵת לֹא־תִקְרִיבוּ אֵלָהּ לַיהוָה
 וְאִשָּׁה לֹא־תִתְּנוּ מֵהֶם עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
 לַיהוָה :²³ וְשׂוֹר וְשָׂה שְׂרוּעַ וְקָלוֹט נְדָבָה
 תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ וּלְנֹדֵר לֹא יִרְצָה :²⁴ וּמַעֲוֹף
 וְכַתּוּת וְנִתּוּק וְכָרוֹת לֹא תִקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה
 וּבְאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ :²⁵ וּמִיַּד בֶּן־נֶכֶר לֹא
 תִקְרִיבוּ אֶת־לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִכָּל־אֵלָהּ
 כִּי מִשְׁחַתֶּם בָּהֶם מוֹם בָּם לֹא יִרְצוּ
 לָכֶם : פ

²⁶ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר :²⁷ שׂוֹר
 אֹו־כֶּשֶׁב אֹו־עֹו כִּי יוֹלֵד וְהָיָה שְׁבַע־עַת
 יָמִים תַּחַת אִמּוֹ וּמִיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי וְהִלְאָה
 יִרְצָה לְקַרְבָּן אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה :²⁸ וְשׂוֹר אֹו־
 שָׂה אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־בְּנוֹ לֹא תִשְׁחֲטוּ בַיּוֹם
 אַחָד :

²⁹ וְכִי־תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח־תּוֹדָה לַיהוָה לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם
 תִּזְבְּחוּ :³⁰ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יֵאָכֵל לֹא־תוֹתִירוּ
 מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר אֲנִי יְהוָה :

³¹ וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם מִצְוֹתַי וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם אֲנִי

28. The law forbids such sacrifice even after eight days.

29–30. These verses present a separate law for the thanksgiving offering, which is here treated as distinct from the *sh'lamim*.

27–28. Maimonides writes, "There is no distinction between the suffering of a human being and that of a beast in this respect, since feelings of maternal affection belong not to the intellectual faculty but to the emotional faculty, which is common to humans and animals alike." Recent research seems to indicate that animals do indeed

have such feelings. Other scholars claim that the primary concern of the law is not with the animal's feelings but with the cultivation of kindness and compassion in the heart of the human being. "It is not because God pities the animal but in order that the people of Israel should not practice cruel habits" (B'khor Shor).

ments: I am the LORD. ³²You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people—I the LORD who sanctify you, ³³I who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God, I the LORD.

יהוה: ³²ולא תחללו את-שם קדשי ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל אני יהוה מקדשכם: ³³המוציא אתכם מארץ מצרים להיות לכם לאלהים אני יהוה: פ

23 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: These are My fixed times, the fixed times of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions.

³On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a sabbath of complete

כג רביעי וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: ²דבר אל-בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם מועדי יהוה אשר-תקראו אתם מקראי קדש אלה הם מועדי: ³ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי שבת שבתון מקרא-קדש כל-

THE CALENDAR OF SACRED TIME (23:1–44)

Chapter 23 presents a calendar of the annual festivals celebrated in biblical times.

SHABBAT (vv. 1–3)

2. Speak to the Israelite people These sacred occasions are to be observed by all the people, not only by the priesthood.

which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions Although the dates of the festivals and the regu-

larity of *Shabbat* were set by God, the Israelites also must proclaim them as sacred.

3. On six days work may be done This statement emphasizes three norms of conduct basic to the observance of *Shabbat*: (a) the prohibition of *m'lakhab* (work), (b) the sanctity of *Shabbat*, and (c) the requirement that *Shabbat* be observed in all Israelite settlements.

sabbath of complete rest Hebrew: *shabbat*

32. in the midst of the Israelite people The public performance of a *mitzvah* not only benefits the one who does it but has an effect on those who see it, even as a violation of the Torah in public is more damaging than similar behavior done privately (Hoffman). This led the Sages to view the sanctifying of God's name (*Kiddush ha-Shem*) as essentially a public act. Thus, for example, a *minyan* is required for recitation of the mourner's *Kaddish* and for other prayers proclaiming God's holiness. The faith of the congregation is strengthened when a newly bereaved man or woman, who might have reason to feel angry with God, stands up in its midst to praise God. The Talmud states that there is no greater achievement for a Jew than acting in a way that causes others to praise and respect the God of Israel and the Torah's ways; and there is no graver sin for a Jew than

acting in a way that causes people to think less of Israel's God and Israel's laws (BT Yoma 86a). The term *Kiddush ha-Shem*, sanctifying God's name in public, is often linked to, but not limited to, acts of martyrdom.

CHAPTER 23

2. The festivals of the Jewish year are listed first in Exod. 34. The list is repeated here to set out the special role and responsibilities of the *kohanim*, again in Num. 28–29 to present the special offerings brought on each festive occasion, and once more in Deut. 16 to emphasize the obligation of pilgrimage to the central shrine. The Israelites find the presence of God in the sanctuary, which represents the permanent holiness of sacred space, and on the festivals, which represent the recurring holiness of sacred time.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

23:3. do no work The Hebrew word *m'lakhab* (work) signifies any creative endeavor. One should refrain not only from paid labor but also from many actions that today may be considered leisure activities, such as gardening, cooking, sewing, arts and crafts, building, and writing.

rest, a sacred occasion. You shall do no work; it shall be a sabbath of the LORD throughout your settlements.

⁴These are the set times of the LORD, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time: ⁵In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to the LORD, ⁶and on the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Feast of Unleavened Bread. You shall eat unleavened bread for seven days. ⁷On the first day you shall celebrate a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. ⁸Seven days you shall make gifts to the LORD. The seventh day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations.

⁹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁰Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:

shabbaton; literally, "the most restful cessation" from assigned tasks. The word *shabbat* means "to desist, cease, be idle."

sabbath of the LORD A day that belongs to God.

FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (vv. 4–8)

4. Each festival is to occur at the same time every year.

5. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month This is the dating system that was in use during much of the biblical period. The unit of time was the lunar month (*hodesh*), not the week; and the months of the year were designated by ordinal numbers: the first month, the second month, and so forth. The counting of months began in the spring.

twilight The period of time between sunset

מְלֹאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ שַׁבַּת הוּא לַיהוָה
בְּכָל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם: פ

⁴אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר-
תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם: ⁵בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן
בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים פֶּסַח
לַיהוָה: ⁶וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה
תִּגַּד הַמִּצּוֹת לַיהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִצּוֹת
תֹּאכְלוּ: ⁷בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ
יְהִי לָכֶם כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ:
⁸וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֹשֶׁה לַיהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת
עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: פ

⁹וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ¹⁰דַּבֵּר
אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם

and nightfall, approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes in duration.

passover offering Here the term "*pesah*" refers to the sacrifice, not to the festival (see Exod. 12:6).

7. On the first and seventh (or last) days of the festival, work is forbidden. The community celebrates together. During the intervening days, necessary normal work may be done, but the celebration continues.

NEW GRAIN CROP (vv. 9–14)

New grain is to be regarded as belonging to God and may not be eaten until certain offerings are taken from it and presented before God. Those offerings remove the sanctity from the crop, thereby releasing the remainder for ordinary human use.

7. you shall not work at your occupations
The Jewish festivals challenge us: Do we define ourselves primarily by our work? Or do we de-

fine ourselves primarily by our total humanity, our ability to celebrate, to sanctify time, to share special moments with our families?

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

23:6. seven days Traditionally, *Pesah* is observed for eight days in the Diaspora. See Comment to Exod. 12:16.

23:7. not work at your occupations Most categories of *m'lakhah* (activities prohibited on *Shabbat* and *Yom Kippur*) are also prohibited on the three pilgrimage festivals and *Rosh ha-Shanah*; the permitted activities are those necessary for the preparation of food (*okhel nefesh*), such as cooking, carrying, and the transfer of fire (M Betz. 5:2).

When you enter the land that I am giving to you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest. ¹¹He shall elevate the sheaf before the LORD for acceptance in your behalf; the priest shall elevate it on the day after the sabbath. ¹²On the day that you elevate the sheaf, you shall offer as a burnt offering to the LORD a lamb of the first year without blemish. ¹³The grain offering with it shall be two-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in, a gift of pleasing odor to the LORD; and the libation with it shall be of wine, a quarter of a *hin*. ¹⁴Until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God, you shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears; it is a law for all time throughout the ages in all your settlements.

¹⁵And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering—the day after the sabbath—you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete: ¹⁶you must count until the day after the seventh week—fifty days; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the LORD. ¹⁷You shall bring from your settlements two

פִּי־תְבֹאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְקִצְרֹתֶם אֶת־קְצִירָהּ וְהִבֵּאתֶם אֶת־עֹמֶר רֵאשִׁית קְצִירְכֶם אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: ¹¹ וְהִנִּיף אֶת־הָעֹמֶר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת יִנִּיפּוּ הַכֹּהֵן: ¹² וְעִשִּׂיתֶם בְּיוֹם הַנִּיפְכֶם אֶת־הָעֹמֶר כֶּבֶשׂ תְּמִים בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה לַיהוָה: ¹³ וּמִנְחָתוֹ שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרֹנִים סֵלֹת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ וְנִסְכּוֹ יֵינן רְבִיעֵת הַדֵּהוּן: ¹⁴ וְלֶחֶם וְקִלְי וְכֶרְמֶל לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַד־עֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַד הִבֵּיאֲכֶם אֶת־קֶרְבַּן אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חֶקֶת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכָל מִשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם: ס

¹⁵ וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת מִיּוֹם הִבֵּיאֲכֶם אֶת־עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה שִׁבְעַ שְׁבָתוֹת תְּמִימֹת תַּהְיִינָה: ¹⁶ עַד מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִת תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַיהוָה: ¹⁷ מִמוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם תָּבִיאוּ* | לֶחֶם תְּנוּפָה

v. 17. א' דגושה

10. sheaf Hebrew: *omer*, a bundle of stalks bound together after reaping. Here, the reference is to barley, the first grain to ripen in the spring.
to the priest The particular priest who officiates at the rite in the sanctuary.

11. The purpose of such rites was to “show” the offering to God, so that it might be accepted.

12–13. The burnt offering (*olah*) was often accompanied by a grain offering (*minḥah*) and a

libation (*nesekh*), as prescribed here. The measure of grain required here is twice the usual amount, to emphasize the importance of grain in this celebration.

14. Until God receives a share of the new grain crop, none of it may be used by humans.

SHAVU·OT FESTIVAL (vv. 15–22)

17. No leaven could be brought up on the

11. the day after the sabbath This starts the counting of the *Omer* (see *Halakhah l'Ma'aseh*, below). The Sages held that “the sabbath” here refers to the *Pesaḥ* festival. Explaining that interpretation, Arama writes, “If the *Omer* were tied to *Shabbat*, symbol of the creation of the world, then the wheat harvest would be seen purely as a natural phenome-

non. Connecting it to the Exodus teaches us to see it, like the Exodus, as an instance of God’s benevolence.” It is through God’s favor, not through our clever manipulation of nature, that the earth yields food for us to eat; that is why we cannot properly enjoy it until we have thanked God for it.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

23:15. you shall count From the second night of *Pesaḥ* until *Shavuot*, we count the 49 days of the *Omer*. Jewish communities hold varying segments of this time period, known as the *S'firah* (literally, “counting”), as a time of semimourning, during which weddings and festive occasions do not take place.

loaves of bread as an elevation offering; each shall be made of two-tenths of a measure of choice flour, baked after leavening, as first fruits to the LORD.¹⁸ With the bread you shall present, as burnt offerings to the LORD, seven yearling lambs without blemish, one bull of the herd, and two rams, with their grain offerings and libations, a gift of pleasing odor to the LORD.¹⁹ You shall also offer one he-goat as a purification offering and two yearling lambs as a sacrifice of well-being.²⁰ The priest shall elevate these—the two lambs—together with the bread of first fruits as an elevation offering before the LORD; they shall be holy to the LORD, for the priest.²¹ On that same day you shall hold a celebration; it shall be a sacred occasion for you; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a law for all time in all your settlements, throughout the ages.

²²And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the LORD am your God.

²³The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁴Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh

שָׁתַיִם שְׁנַי עֶשְׂרִים סֹלֶת תַּהֲיִינָה חֶמֶץ
תֹּאפִינָה בְּכוּרִים לַיהוָה: ¹⁸ וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם
עַל-הַלֶּחֶם שְׁבַעַת כְּבָשִׂים תְּמִימִם בְּנֵי
שָׁנָה וּפָר בֶּן-בָּקָר אֶחָד וְאֵילָם שְׁנַיִם יִהְיוּ
עֲלֶיהָ לַיהוָה וּמִנְחָתָם וְנִסְכֵיהֶם אִשָּׁה
רִיחַ-נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה: ¹⁹ וְעֲשִׂיתֶם שְׁעִיר-
עֲזִים אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת וּשְׁנַי כְּבָשִׂים בְּנֵי
שָׁנָה לְזִבַח שְׁלָמִים: ²⁰ וְהִנִּיף הַכֹּהֵן |
אֹתָם עַל לֶחֶם הַבְּכוּרִים תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי
יְהוָה עַל-שְׁנַי כְּבָשִׂים קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיוּ לַיהוָה
לִכְהֹן: ²¹ וּקְרֹאתֶם בְּעֶצֶם | הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת
עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ חֻקַּת עוֹלָם בְּכָל-
מוֹשְׁבֵיכֶם לְדוֹרֵיכֶם:

²² וּבִקְצֹרְכֶם אֶת-קְצִיר אֲרֻצְכֶם לֹא-
תִכְלֶה פֶּאת שְׂדֶךְ בְּקִצְרוֹ וְלִקַּט קְצִירָךְ
לֹא תִלְקַט לְעַנִּי וְלִגֵּר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ס

²³ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ²⁴ דַּבֵּר
אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי

altar. Here, because no part of the offering presented before God ascends the altar, it could be made of “leavened dough” (*hametz*).

18–20. The offerings prescribed in these verses are typical of those included in public rites, in which several different sacrifices are offered together to constitute a more elaborate celebration. The animals, both small and large, are to be offered as burnt offerings and are accompanied by the grain offerings and libations.

20. The priest shall elevate these—the two lambs That is, the two yearling lambs.

they shall be holy to the LORD, for the priest In the first instance, these offerings are the Lord’s,

who, in turn, commands that they be allotted to the priests.

FIRST DAY OF THE SEVENTH MONTH (vv. 23–25)

This section ordains the celebration of three major sacred occasions occurring during the seventh month: (a) the first day of the seventh month (which in the later tradition became the Jewish New Year), (b) the Day of Atonement, and (c) the *Sukkot* festival.

24. Here, the day is presented as one of rest and sacred assembly. It is conceived of not as a new year but as an occasion before the Day of

22. Why are the gleanings of the harvest mentioned here, interrupting the list of festivals? Perhaps because they were gathered at the *Shavu-ot* harvest season, as we read in the Book of Ruth, or because, as the *Sifra* suggests,

when one shares one’s bounty with the poor, it is as if it were offered on God’s altar.

24. The Torah never refers to the first day of the seventh month as *Rosh ha-Shanah*. That term first appears in Ezek. 40:1. In the Torah,

month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts. ²⁵You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall bring a gift to the LORD.

²⁶The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁷Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self-denial, and you shall bring a gift to the LORD; ²⁸you shall do no work throughout that day. For it is a Day of Atonement, on which expiation is made on your behalf before the LORD your God. ²⁹Indeed, any person who does not practice self-denial throughout that day shall be cut off from his kin; ³⁰and whoever does any work throughout that day, I will cause that person to perish from among his people. ³¹Do no work whatever; it is a law for all time, throughout the ages in all your settlements. ³²It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your sabbath.

Atonement. The Hebrew term *zikhron t'ru-ah* means, literally, "commemoration by blasting" the *shofar*.

DAY OF ATONEMENT (vv. 26–32)

See Comments to 16:29–34.

בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן זִכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ: ²⁵כָּל-מְלָאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֲשֶׁר לַיהוָה: ^ס

²⁶וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ²⁷אָךְ בְּעֶשְׂרֵי לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים הוּא מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם וְעֲנִיתֶם אֶת-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֲשֶׁר לַיהוָה: ²⁸וְכָל-מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ בַעֲצֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי יוֹם כִּפּוּרִים הוּא לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ²⁹כִּי כָל-הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תַעֲזֶה בַעֲצֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְנִכְרְתָה מֵעַמִּיהָ: ³⁰וְכָל-הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תַעֲשֶׂה כָל-מְלָאכָה בַעֲצֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְהָאֲבֹדְתִי אֶת-הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מִקְרַב עֲמָה: ³¹כָּל-מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בְּכֹל מִשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם: ³²שַׁבָּת שַׁבָּתוֹן הוּא לָכֶם וְעֲנִיתֶם אֶת-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם בַּתְּשׁוּעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּעָרֵב מֵעָרֵב עַד-עָרֵב

שְׁשִׁי תִשְׁבְּתוּ שַׁבְּתֵיכֶם: פ

27. you shall practice self-denial That is, you shall fast.

32. from evening to evening, you shall observe this This verse has been interpreted as setting the norm for every festival in the Jewish religious calendar, namely, that the celebration

it is called "a day of remembrance" or "a day of sounding the *shofar*." Readers may be surprised to learn that *Rosh ha-Shanah* begins the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar rather than the first. It commemorates the creation of the world, which traditionally is believed to have happened in the fall, the beginning of the new agricultural cycle. But the people Israel date their calendar from the Exodus, which

happened in the spring (cf. Exod. 12:2, designating the month of the Exodus as the first month of Israel's calendar).

32. on the ninth day... at evening The *Yom Kippur* fast does not start until the evening (after sunset, at night) after the ninth day. "Eating and drinking responsibly on the day before and the day after *Yom Kippur* are as much of a *mitzvah* as fasting on *Yom Kippur*" (BT Yoma 81b).

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

23:24. commemorated with loud blasts This is the source for the ruling that the *shofar* is not sounded on *Rosh ha-Shanah* when it coincides with *Shabbat*, which is itself a commemoration (BT RH 29b). On such a *Shabbat*, we "remember the blasting" in our prayers. It is also the source for the practice during the *Musaf* service on *Rosh ha-Shanah* of reciting 10 biblical verses about each of the themes of God's kingship, God's remembrance, and the *shofar* (BT RH 32a).

³³The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ³⁴Say to the Israelite people:

On the fifteenth day of this seventh month there shall be the Feast of Booths to the LORD, [to last] seven days. ³⁵The first day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations; ³⁶seven days you shall bring gifts to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall observe a sacred occasion and bring a gift to the LORD; it is a solemn gathering: you shall not work at your occupations.

³⁷Those are the set times of the LORD that you shall celebrate as sacred occasions, bringing gifts to the LORD—burnt offerings, grain offerings, sacrifices, and libations, on each day what is proper to it—³⁸apart from the sabbaths of the LORD, and apart from your gifts and from all your votive offerings and from all your freewill offerings that you give to the LORD.

³⁹Mark, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of the LORD [to last] seven days: a complete rest on

שש³³ וידבר יהוה אל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ³⁴דַּבֵּר אל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי לַיהוָה חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לַיהוָה: ³⁵בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ כָּל־מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: ³⁶שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תִּקְרִיבוּ אֹשֶׁה לַיהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יְהִי־הוּא לָכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֹשֶׁה לַיהוָה עֲצַרְתָּ הוּא כָּל־מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ:

³⁷אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרָאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְהַקְרִיב אֹשֶׁה לַיהוָה עֲלֶיּה וּמִנְחָה זָבַח וּנְסֻכִּים דְּבַר־יוֹם בַּיּוֹמוֹ: ³⁸מִלֶּבֶד שַׁבְּתוֹת יְהוָה וּמִלֶּבֶד מִתְּנוּתֵיכֶם וּמִלֶּבֶד כָּל־נְדָרֵיכֶם וּמִלֶּבֶד כָּל־נְדָבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר תִּתְּנוּ לַיהוָה:

³⁹אָךְ בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאֶסְפְּכֶם אֶת־תְּבוּאת הָאָרֶץ תַּחֲגוּ אֶת־חַג־יְהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּיּוֹם

commences on the evening (actually the night, after sunset) that precedes the day of the festival. Scheduling the Day of Atonement only a few days before the major pilgrimage festival of the year ensured that the sanctuary and the people would be restored to a state of fitness in time for the celebration of the autumn *Sukkot* observance.

SUKKOT FESTIVAL (vv. 33–44)

34. the Feast of Booths The Hebrew word *suk-*

kab, “booth,” derives from the verb סכך, “to cover over,” as with branches. It designates a small, usually temporary, structure that is covered on top and only partially enclosed on its sides.

36. solemn gathering This term derives from the Hebrew verb עצר, “to detain, restrain, confine,” and may refer to the fact that the people are kept together for an additional day.

35. first day Why is it called the “first day” when it is actually the fifteenth of the month? After the slate has been wiped clean on *Yom Kippur*, we begin our relationship with God anew on *Sukkot* (Lev. R. 30:7).

36. solemn gathering The word *atzeret* is usually understood as “concluding event” or “solemn gathering.” But Hirsch here understands it as derived from a root meaning “to gather, to store up.” Even as farmers gather up

the harvest in the autumn to last through the winter months, even as animals store food for the winter, the Israelites are urged to store up the feelings of gratitude and dependence that mark the holiday season—to last them through the months that will follow, months without festival days. (In the biblical period, *Hanukkah* did not exist. It celebrates events that took place after the time of the Torah.)

the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. ⁴⁰On the first day you shall take the product of *hadar* trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. ⁴¹You shall observe it as a festival of the LORD for seven days in the year; you shall observe it in the seventh month as a law for all time, throughout the ages. ⁴²You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, ⁴³in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the LORD your God.

⁴⁴So Moses declared to the Israelites the set times of the LORD.

הָרֵאשׁוֹן שְׁבֻתוֹן וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי שְׁבֻתוֹן׃
 40 וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרֵאשׁוֹן פְּרֵי עֵץ
 הַדָּר לְכַפֹּת תְּמָרִים וְעֵנָף עֵץ-עֵבֶת וְעַרְבֵי-
 נָחַל וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
 שִׁבְעַת יָמִים׃ 41 וְחֻגְתֶּם אֹתוֹ חֹג לַיהוָה
 שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם
 בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי תַחֲגוּ אֹתוֹ׃ 42 בַּסֻּכּוֹת
 תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל-הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
 יֵשְׁבוּ בַסֻּכּוֹת׃ 43 לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם
 כִּי בַסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 כִּי הוֹצִיאִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה
 אֱלֹהֵיכֶם׃

44 וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת-מִעַדֵי יְהוָה אֶל-בְּנֵי

יִשְׂרָאֵל׃ פ

40. hadar trees Literally, “beautiful trees.” They symbolize the abundance of water and oases and the beauty of the land of Israel. In horticulture, there are no particular trees designated as *hadar*. Traditionally, the “product of *hadar* trees” has been taken to be the citron (*etrog*).

you shall rejoice Rejoicing is explicitly commanded in this chapter only for the celebration

of *Sukkot*. The pressing of the grapes had been completed, and there was no labor to be done until the beginning of the next agricultural cycle. The people had leisure time as well as ample food and wine with which to rejoice.

43. I made the Israelite people live in booths According to Exod. 12:37, *Sukkot* (literally, Booths) is the name of the first stop on the Exodus route from Egypt.

40. The Midrash offers many interpretations of the symbolic meaning of the four species of *Sukkot*. The *lulav* (palm branch) represents the spine—erect but not rigid; the myrtle, the eyes; the willow, the lips; and the *etrog*, the heart. They summon us to use all of our limbs and organs to rejoice before the Lord. Yet another *midrash* compares the *etrog*, which tastes and smells good, to people who possess learning and also do good deeds;

the *lulav*, which has taste but no fragrance, to people who have learning but do not do good; the myrtle, which has fragrance but no taste, to people who do good but lack learning; and the willow, with neither taste nor fragrance, to people who lack both learning and good deeds but who are still to be counted as members of the community in order for the community to be complete (Lev. R. 30:10–12).

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

23:40. the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook This is the source for the commandment to take the citron fruit (*etrog*) with the branches of willow (*aravah*) and myrtle (*hadas*) bound to a palm branch (*lulav*) to fulfill the *mitzvah* of waving the *lulav* during *Sukkot*.

23:42. live in booths seven days One can fulfill this commandment by either sleeping in the *sukkah* (booth) or eating one's meals there during the seven-day holiday. One is exempt from eating or dwelling in the *sukkah* if the weather or other factors cause undue hardship (BT Suk. 25b–26a,29a).

23:44. So Moses declared On festivals, this verse is recited aloud before the *Amidah* during the *Ma-ariv* service, and before the blessing over wine for the *Kiddush* preceding lunch.

24

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

²Command the Israelite people to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, for kindling lamps regularly. ³Aaron shall set them up in the Tent of Meeting outside the curtain of the Pact [to burn] from evening to morning before the LORD regularly; it is a law for all time throughout the ages. ⁴He shall set up the lamps on the pure lampstand before the LORD [to burn] regularly.

⁵You shall take choice flour and bake of it twelve loaves, two-tenths of a measure for each loaf. ⁶Place them on the pure table before the LORD in two rows, six to a row. ⁷With each row you shall place pure frankincense, which is to be a token offering for the bread, as a gift to the LORD. ⁸He shall arrange them before the LORD regularly every sabbath day—it is a commitment for all time on the part of the Israelites. ⁹They shall belong to Aaron and his sons, who shall eat them in the sacred precinct; for they are his as most holy things from the LORD's gifts, a due for all time.

כד

שביעי

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ²צִו אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ כְּתִית לַמָּאֹר לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד: ³מִחוּץ לְפָרֹכֶת הָעֵדוּת בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד יַעֲרֹף אֹתוֹ אֶהְרֹן מֵעֶרֶב עַד-בֹּקֶר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תָּמִיד חֶקֶת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: ⁴עַל הַמְּנֹרָה הַשְּׁהֲרָה יַעֲרֹף אֶת-הַנְּרוֹת לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תָּמִיד: ⁵

⁵וְלִקְחֹתָ סֹלֶת וְאָפִיתָ אֹתָהּ שְׁתַּיִם עֶשְׂרֵה חֲלוֹת שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרֵנָיִם יִהְיֶה הַחֲלָה הָאֶחָת: ⁶וְשִׁמְתָּ אוֹתָם שְׁתַּיִם מֵעֶרְכֹת שֵׁשׁ הַמְּעֻרְכֶת עַל הַשֻּׁלְחָן הַשְּׁהֲרָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ⁷וְנָתַתְּ עַל-הַמְּעֻרְכֶת לְבֹנָה זָכָה וְהִיתָה לְלֶחֶם לְאִזְכָּרָה אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה: ⁸בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת יַעֲרֹכְנּוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תָּמִיד מֵאֵת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִית עוֹלָם: ⁹וְהִיתָה לְאֹהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו וְאָכְלוּהוּ בַּמָּקוֹם קֹדֶשׁ כִּי קֹדֶשׁ קְדוּשִׁים הוּא* לוֹ מֵאֲשֵׁי יְהוָה חֶק-עוֹלָם: ¹⁰

v. 9. סבירין ומטעין "היא"

A COLLECTION OF LAWS (24:1–23)

KINDLING THE *M'NORAH* (vv. 1–4)

2. regularly Hebrew: *tamid*, often mistranslated as “eternal,” “forever,” or “always.” It conveys the sense of regularity, whether used as an adjective or as an adverb (see v. 3). The lamps in the sanctuary burned only from evening to morning (see v. 3).

3. the curtain of the Pact That is, the curtain of the Ark of the Pact. Behind the curtain stood the Ark, in which rested the tablets of the Pact.

TWO ROWS OF BREAD (vv. 5–9)

5. The bread presented as an offering on a table inside the sanctuary is known in Exodus as “the bread of display” (*lehem ha-panim*). It was viewed and accepted by God.

8. every sabbath day Hebrew: *b'yom ha-shabbat*, *b'yom ha-shabbat*; literally, “on the sabbath day, on the sabbath day”). In Hebrew, repetition is a way of expressing regularity.

CHAPTER 24

2. for kindling lamps regularly A midrash (Lev. R. 31:4) pictures God saying, “As you shine your light on Me (i.e., teaching the world about Me), I will shine My light on you (make you special among the nations).”

5. The Talmud states that “a great miracle

was performed in the Tent of Meeting; the sacred loaves of bread never grew stale” (BT Men. 29a). According to Hirsch, those words were not meant to be taken literally. They convey the idea that the sanctuary was immune to the process of boredom and habit that afflict many religious institutions. Rituals did not grow stale or obsolete there.

¹⁰There came out among the Israelites one whose mother was Israelite and whose father was Egyptian. And a fight broke out in the camp between that half-Israelite and a certain Israelite. ¹¹The son of the Israelite woman pronounced the Name in blasphemy, and he was brought to Moses—now his mother’s name was Shelomith daughter of Dibri of the tribe of Dan—¹²and he was placed in custody, until the decision of the LORD should be made clear to them.

¹³And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁴Take the blasphemer outside the camp; and let all who were within hearing lay their hands upon his head, and let the whole community stone him.

¹⁵And to the Israelite people speak thus: Anyone who blasphemes his God shall bear his guilt; ¹⁶if he also pronounces the name LORD, he shall be put to death. The whole community shall stone him; stranger or citizen, if he has thus pronounced the Name, he shall be put to death.

¹⁷If anyone kills any human being, he shall

10 וַיֵּצֵא בֶן-אִשָּׁה יִשְׂרָאֵלִית וְהוּא בֶן-אִישׁ מִצְרַיִם בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּנְצוּ בַּמַּחֲנֶה בֶן הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִית וְאִישׁ הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִי: 11 וַיִּקַּב בֶּן-הָאִשָּׁה הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִית אֶת-הַשֵּׁם וַיִּקְלַל וַיְבִיאוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְשֵׁם אִמּוֹ שְׁלֹמִית בֶּת-דַּבְרֵי לְמִטֵּה-דָן: 12 וַיִּנְחָהוּ בַּמִּשְׁמֶר לְפָרֵשׁ לָהֶם עַל-פִּי יְהוָה: 13 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 14 הוֹצֵא אֶת-הַמְקַלֵּל אֶל-מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְסָמְכוּ כָל-הַשְּׂמֵעִים אֶת-יְדֵיהֶם עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ וְרָגְמוּ אֹתוֹ כָּל-הָעֵדָה: 15 וְאֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּדַבֵּר לֵאמֹר אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי-יִקְלַל אֱלֹהָיו וְנָשָׂא חֲטָאוֹ: 16 וְנִקַּב שֵׁם-יְהוָה מוֹת יוּמָת רָגוּם יְרַגְמוּ-בּוֹ כָּל-הָעֵדָה כַּגֹּל כַּאֲזָרַח בְּנִקְבוֹ-שֵׁם יוּמָת: 17 וְאִישׁ כִּי יַבֶּה כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ אָדָם מוֹת יוּמָת:

BLASPHEMY AND OTHER SERIOUS CRIMES (vv. 10–23)

10–12. This brief narrative introduces the law concerning the crime of blasphemy in verse 14.

14. outside the camp Capital punishment took place outside the area of settlement. This was due, at least in part, to the impurity attached to a corpse.

all who were within hearing . . . the whole community The entire community has responsibility to root out blasphemy, because it adversely

affects everyone, even though it is committed by a single individual.

16. stranger or citizen Non-Israelites are responsible for acts considered vital to maintaining the sacred nature of the community. Offenses that endanger that sanctity are punishable, even when committed by non-Israelite residents. The Sages later held that all resident aliens were required to observe the Noahide laws.

17. The law is stated here because of its relationship to the death penalty imposed for blasphemy.

10–16. This is a puzzling incident. Did the blasphemer curse God, curse someone else using the name of God, or simply pronounce God’s name without due reverence? (“*M’kallel*” can mean “curse” or “show disrespect.”) It fits Leviticus’s commitment to taking words seriously. Words are ephemeral but real and have the power to hurt or to heal. Using the power of speech (with its potential for holiness unique to humans) to hurt another person is a grave of-

fense, deeply disturbing to Leviticus with its emphasis on the holiness of the ordinary and the things that distinguish humans from beasts. The Torah emphasizes that the blasphemer’s parents were of different ethnic-religious origins. Might this have been a home where no religious values were taught, because there was no religion shared by all members of the family?

be put to death. ¹⁸One who kills a beast shall make restitution for it: life for life. ¹⁹If anyone maims his fellow, as he has done so shall it be done to him: ²⁰fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The injury he inflicted on another shall be inflicted on him. ²¹One who kills a beast shall make restitution for it; but one who kills a human being shall be put to death. ²²You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen alike: for I the LORD am your God.

²³Moses spoke thus to the Israelites. And they took the blasphemer outside the camp and pelted him with stones. The Israelites did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

18 וּמִפֶּה נֶפֶשׁ בְּהֵמָה יִשְׁלַמְנָה נֶפֶשׁ תַּחַת נֶפֶשׁ: 19 וְאִישׁ כִּי־יִתֵּן מוֹם בְּעַמִּיתוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה כֵּן יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ: 20 שֹׁבֵר תַּחַת שֹׁבֵר עֵין תַּחַת עֵין שֵׁן תַּחַת שֵׁן כַּאֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן מוֹם בְּאָדָם כֵּן יִנָּתֵן בּוֹ: 21 וּמִפֶּה בְּהֵמָה יִשְׁלַמְנָה וּמִפֶּה אָדָם יוּמָת: 22 מִשֹּׁפֵט אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לָכֶם בְּגֵר כַּאֲזָרַח יִהְיֶה כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: 23 וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיּוֹצִיאוּ אֶת־הַמְּקַלֵּל אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרְגְּמוּ אֹתוֹ אֲבָן וּבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: פ

18. life for life That is, the assessed value of the animal destroyed or of another animal provided in place of the one killed.

19. maims Literally, “gives an injury.” The Hebrew word for “blemish, injury” (*mum*) here refers to a permanent condition.

22. The same rules apply whether the offender or the victim are Israelites or resident non-Israelites.

19. as he has done so shall it be done to him Saadia sought to prove that the verse refers to monetary punishment, as the Sages suggested, rather than retaliation, by citing the story of Samson in Judges 15. Samson says of

his attack on the Philistines, “as they did to me, I did to them.” Yet what he did to them was not literally “as they did” but instead what they deserved.

הַפְּטָרָה אֵמֹר

HAFTARAH FOR EMOR

EZEKIEL 44:15–31

This *haftarah* contains a list of regulations addressed to Zadokite priests, which is part of a larger blueprint for the restoration of worship articulated in Ezek. 40–48. Ezekiel’s heavenly vision of the new temple’s ground plan is dated to the beginning of the year 572 B.C.E., 14 years after the fall of Jerusalem (40:1). The Zadokite priests are the only levitical priests who may now serve within the sanctuary (vv. 15–16). Their rules and regulations (vv. 17–31) have a notable affinity with laws in the Book of Leviticus.

Since antiquity, though, it has been observed that a number of the priestly regulations promulgated by Ezekiel contradict their counterparts in the Torah. This led to a report that the Book of Ezekiel was to have been withdrawn from circulation. The contradictions were reconciled only through a heroic act of sustained interpretation by the sage Ḥanina ben Hezekiah (BT Shab. 13b).

Despite the manifest differences in style and stringency between Ezekiel’s regulations and those in the laws of Moses, one must assume that the ancient Israelite transmitters of tradition believed that they had the instructions in the Book of Ezekiel on good divine authority (Ezek. 44:9). The fact that the revelation to the prophet appears to supplement or revise the Torah does not seem to have been a problem. New times could bring new divine specifications for priests, authorizing new priestly families and reauthorizing their duties. The language of Ezek. 44:17–31 in the *haftarah* became a problem apparently only in later Rabbinic times, when the prohibition in Deut. 13:1 against adding to or subtracting from God’s law was understood to give exclusive authority to the rules and regulations found in the Torah.

The central concern of Ezekiel’s instruction is the elevation and authorization of the priests descended from Zadok. As we are told in verses preceding the *haftarah*, this purpose is achieved not

only by the prophet’s denigration of the other levitical priests for having been lax in securing the sacral areas against alien encroachment (44:6–7) or by his smearing them with the taint of apostasy (v. 12). Ezekiel also accomplishes his intent by appropriating and revising older priestly language.

Thus in the Torah Moses speaks of the special status of the Aaronid lineage, appointed to “discharge the duties” of the shrine (tent) and its holy altar. Their brethren, the Levites, however, are enjoined to “serve” them without the right to encroach on the holy objects or the altar (Num. 18:1–4). The Levites are thus the servitors of the priests and their divine labor, but cannot serve as priests in their own right. Ezekiel, by contrast, promotes the Zadokite line as having the exclusive right to “discharge the duties” of the Temple and “serve” God as levitical priests. Only the Zadokites can serve in the sanctuary, discharging all priestly functions, whereas the other Levites were demoted to the rank of servitors, guarding the gates, doing menial tasks, or assisting the people in their sacrifices (44:11). The biblical sources do not indicate that this revolution was the result of a contest for priestly power in the Second Temple. Nevertheless, the attestation of more liberal priestly regulations at just this time (Isa. 56), suggests that Ezekiel’s propaganda for the Zadokites was part of contemporary ideologic strife over the character and limits of the priesthood.

On a broader plane, the notable gaps in Ezekiel’s regulations constitute another puzzle, because their manifest purpose was to constitute a self-standing messianic program. Particularly striking is the absence of any mention of the Ark and cherubim in the inner sanctuary, or the table for the showbread in the outer area, or the anointing oil in the Temple or the courts. Furthermore, there is no reference to the purgation of the Temple on *Yom Kippur* (Lev. 16), to the dramatic cer-

emonies of *Pesah* eve (Exod. 12:1–14), or to the species used to celebrate the festival of Booths (Lev. 23:39–43). Ezekiel thus appears to reflect an independent strand of cultic tradition and information. For him, as for his colleagues, concern with priestly comportment and purity is uppermost.

At the center of the priestly activity, and crucial to the maintenance of the proper and sacred order of things, is the law that the priests must teach: separating what needs to be separated, judging sacral and civil matters according to God's word, and making sure that the holy days are properly safeguarded and sanctified. In this way, the priests stand at the center of the sacred system, mediating between heaven and earth so that God's teachings may be properly applied.

RELATION OF THE *HAFTARAH*
TO THE *PARASHAH*

The complex relationship between the regulations linking the *parashah* and the *haftarah* exemplifies the process of tradition and change—the need to maintain continuity with the sacred practices of

the past and the desire to preserve the integrity of the tradition through leaders who have proved ready to preserve its ideals. Ezekiel thus functions as a new Moses, a spokesman for God in specifying the proper actions required of priests.

In describing priestly deportment, the *parashah* opens with a warning to “the priests, the sons of Aaron,” not to defile themselves by contact with the dead of their people, lest they thereby desecrate their holy status. The only exceptions are certain close blood relations (Lev. 21:1–4). Ezekiel speaks likewise to “the levitical priests descended from Zadok” (Ezek. 44:15) and provides the ritual process for the reincorporation of priests who have been so defiled (vv. 25–27).

The inevitable conflicts that arise between the priests' religious duties and their social or familial obligations is the corollary concern. There are acts of care in the everyday world that take precedence over every personal or ritual consideration. The Sages stress as much in their teaching that a priest must defile himself to honor and dispose of a corpse if he would be the only one who could perform this task (Tanḥ. 3).

44 ¹⁵Now the levitical priests descended from Zadok, who maintained the service of My Sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from Me—they shall approach Me to minister to Me; they shall stand before Me to offer Me fat and blood—declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶They

מד ¹⁵וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם בְּנֵי צְדוֹק אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְרוּ אֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶת מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתַעֲוֹת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַלִּי הִמָּה יִקְרְבוּ אֵלַי לְשָׁרְתָנִי וְעַמְדוֹ לִפְנֵי לְהַקְרִיב לִי חֶלֶב וְדָם נְאֻם יְהוָה: ¹⁶הִמָּה יָבִאוּ

Ezekiel 44:15. levitical priests This title refers to priests of the tribe of Levi (Rashi). The designation first occurs in Deut. 18:1 (although that is not a priestly source). The subsequent phrase, in Deut. 18:1, “the whole tribe of Levi,” emphasizes that all the Levites are priests, eligible for service in the Temple. The phrase in Deuteronomy appears to counter the position in Leviticus and Numbers, where the priesthood is restricted to the family of Aaron. In Ezekiel, the priesthood is restricted to the Zadokites alone, as a reward for their faithful service.

Zadok This is the ancestral line of priests in Jerusalem. Zadok served as a bearer of the ark for David, along with Abiathar (2 Sam. 15:24–29, 35,

17:15). Zadok supported Solomon for dynastic succession (1 Kings 1:8, 32), whereas Abiathar backed Adonijah. Therefore, it was Zadok who anointed Solomon king (1 Kings 1:39–45). Eventually, Solomon banished Abiathar (1 Kings 2:27), and Zadok remained the sole priest of the king. It is this old Jerusalemite priesthood that Ezekiel designates for his new Temple program. According to biblical genealogies, priests of the Second Temple were of the Zadokite line up to the Hasmonean rebellion. The Hasmonean priests were not Zadokite. This led to internal divisions among the groups that constituted late Second Temple Jewry.

alone may enter My Sanctuary and they alone shall approach My table to minister to Me; and they shall keep My charge. ¹⁷And when they enter the gates of the inner court, they shall wear linen vestments: they shall have nothing woolen upon them when they minister inside the gates of the inner court. ¹⁸They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen breeches on their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causes sweat. ¹⁹When they go out to the outer court—the outer court where the people are—they shall remove the vestments in which they minister and shall deposit them in the sacred chambers; they shall put on other garments, lest they make the people consecrated by [contact with] their vestments. ²⁰They shall neither shave their heads nor let their hair go untrimmed; they shall keep their hair trimmed. ²¹No priest shall drink wine when he enters into the inner court. ²²They shall not marry widows or divorced women; they may marry only virgins of the stock of the House of Israel, or widows who are widows of priests.

²³They shall declare to My people what is sacred and what is profane, and inform them what is pure and what is impure. ²⁴In lawsuits, too, it is they who shall act as judges; they shall decide them in accordance with My rules. They shall preserve My teachings and My laws regarding all My fixed occasions; and they shall maintain the sanctity of My sabbaths.

²⁵[A priest] shall not defile himself by entering [a house] where there is a dead person. He shall defile himself only for father or mother, son or daughter, brother or unmarried sister. ²⁶After he has become pure, seven days shall be

אֶל־מִקְדָּשִׁי וְהָמָּה יִקְרְבוּ אֶל־שֻׁלְחָנִי לְשֻׁרְתָּנִי וְשָׁמְרוּ אֶת־מִשְׁמֵרְתִּי: ¹⁷ וְהָיָה בְּבוֹאָם אֶל־שַׁעְרֵי הַחֲצָר הַפְּנִימִית בְּגָדֵי פְשָׁתִים יִלְבְּשׁוּ וְלֹא־יַעֲלֶה עֲלֵיהֶם צֹמֶר בְּשֻׁרְתָם בְּשַׁעְרֵי הַחֲצָר הַפְּנִימִית וּבִיתָהּ: ¹⁸ פְּאָרֵי פְשָׁתִים יִהְיוּ עַל־רֵאשָׁם וּמִכְנָסֵי פְשָׁתִים יִהְיוּ עַל־מְתַנִּיהֶם לֹא יִחְגְּרוּ בַיּוֹע: ¹⁹ וּבְצֵאתָם אֶל־הַחֲצָר הַחִיצוֹנָה אֶל־הָעָם יִפְשְׁטוּ אֶת־בְּגֵדֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר־הֵמָּה מִשְׁרְתָם בָּם וְהִנִּיחוּ אוֹתָם בַּלְשָׁכַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְלִבְשׁוּ בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים וְלֹא־יִקְדְּשׁוּ אֶת־הָעָם בְּבִגְדֵיהֶם: ²⁰ וְרֵאשָׁם לֹא יִגְלְחוּ וּפָרַע לֹא יִשְׁלַחוּ כָּסוּם יִכְסֹמוּ אֶת־רֵאשֵׁיהֶם: ²¹ וַיִּינּוּ לֹא־יִשְׁתּוּ כֹל־כִּיָּהֵן בְּבוֹאָם אֶל־הַחֲצָר הַפְּנִימִית: ²² וְאַל־מִנְהָ וּגְרוּשָׁה לֹא־יִקְחוּ לָהֶם לְנָשִׁים כִּי אִם־ בְּתוּלַת מְזֻרַע בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָאֲלֻמָּנָה אֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶה אֲלֻמָּנָה מִכֹּהֵן יִקְחוּ:

²³ וְאֶת־עַמִּי יוֹרוּ בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחָל וּבֵין־טָמֵא לְטָהוֹר יוֹדְעִם: ²⁴ וְעַל־רִיב הִמָּה יַעֲמְדוּ לִשְׁפֹט לְמִשְׁפָּט בְּמִשְׁפָּטֵי וּשְׁפֹטָהוּ יִשְׁפֹּטוּ וְאֶת־תּוֹרֹתַי וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתַי בְּכָל־מוֹעֲדַי יִשְׁמְרוּ וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי יִקְדְּשׁוּ:

²⁵ וְאַל־מֵת אָדָם לֹא יָבֹא לְטָמְאָה כִּי אִם־לְאָב וּלְאִם וּלְבֶן וּלְבַת לְאָח וּלְאָחוֹת אֲשֶׁר־לֹא־הֵיְתָה לְאִישׁ יְטָמְאוּ: ²⁶ וְאַחֲרָיֶם טְהַרְתּוּ שְׁבַע־יָמִים יִסְפְּרוּ־לוֹ: ²⁷ וּבַיּוֹם

16. My table This may refer to the altar itself and not to the table of the showbread (Targ. Jon., Radak).

19. lest they make the people consecrated The concern is to avoid the real transfer of the holy quality of the vestments to the laity; it is not to avoid the appearance that the people were holy like the priests (Radak).

25. He shall defile himself only for . . . Some ancient Sages noted the absence of the wife in this list and in Lev. 21:2–3. They resolved the matter by suggesting that the reference to near kin in Lev. 21:2 refers to her (cf. *Sifra*; BT Yev. 90b).

26–27. The rules of decontamination from corpse defilement in Ezek. 44:26–27 seem to dif-

counted off for him; ²⁷and on the day that he reenters the inner court of the Sanctuary to minister in the Sanctuary, he shall present his purification offering—declares the Lord GOD.

²⁸This shall be their portion, for I am their portion; and no holding shall be given them in Israel, for I am their holding. ²⁹The grain offerings, purification offerings, and guilt offerings shall be consumed by them. Everything proscribed in Israel shall be theirs. ³⁰All the choice first fruits of every kind, and all the gifts of every kind—of all your contributions—shall go to the priests. You shall further give the first of the yield of your baking to the priest, that a blessing may rest upon your home.

³¹Priests shall not eat anything, whether bird or animal, that died or was torn by beasts.

בָּאוּ אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֶל־הַחֹצֵר הַפְּנִימִית
לְשֵׁרֶת בְּקֹדֶשׁ יִקְרִיב חֲטָאתוֹ נֶאֱמַר אֲדֹנָי
יְהוָה:

²⁸וְהִיְתָה לָהֶם לְנַחֲלָה אֲנִי נַחֲלָתָם
וְאַחֲזִיהָ לֹא־תִתְּנוּ לָהֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי
אַחֲזֵתָם: ²⁹הַמִּנְחָה וְהַחֲטָאת וְהָאֲשָׁם
הַמָּה יֹאכְלוּם וְכָל־חֶרֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לָהֶם
יְהִיָּה: ³⁰וְרֵאשִׁית כָּל־בְּבוּרֵי כָל־וְכָל־
תְּרוּמַת כָּל מִכְּלֵ תְרוּמוֹתֵיכֶם לַכֹּהֲנִים
יְהִיָּה וְרֵאשִׁית עֲרֹסוֹתֵיכֶם תִּתְּנוּ לַכֹּהֵן
לְהַנִּיחַ בְּרָכָה אֶל־בֵּיתְךָ:

³¹כָּל־נִבְלָה וּטְרֵפָה מִן־הָעוֹף וּמִן־
הַבְּהֵמָה לֹא יֹאכְלוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים: פ

fer from those stated in Num. 19, where only a seven-day period of purification is prescribed. The added week here for priestly purification has been understood as a special stringency for the New Age (Eliezer of Beaugency; Radak).

28. This shall be their portion Ezekiel's ref-

erences to priestly portions in verse 29 echo Num. 18:20,23–24 and Deut. 18:1–2. The idea that God is the priests' portion refers to their receipt of portions from the sacrifices offered (Josh. 13:14; see Ezek. 44:29), and to the Israelite tithes (Num. 18:24, see Ezek. 44:30–31).