

Tell a story
Parshah Emor
Leviticus 21:1-24:23
by Julie Zhuk on 2022-05-16
Comments

The parshah covers a lot of information. It starts talking about what G-d expected from men who were from the tribe of the kohanim. They were the ones who provided a lot of services in the holy temple. For that reason, G-d did not want them to have any deformities. The holy temple was a very sacred building and G-d wanted the people in it and the building itself to stay pure. That was the reason why the kohanim men were created to not be around dead bodies or go to a cemetery. Finding the right woman could be tricky for them, they were looking for a woman who had saved herself for marriage. The parsha does not focus on other tribes in Judaism, just the kohanim. In this parsha, the Jews give many offerings of animals towards G-d. G-d has the request that none of these animals chosen have any form of deformities. Again, these sacrifices took place within the holy temple, so the same rule as to humans without deformities applied to the animals.

Reading this, I never thought about animals being born with any deformities to begin with. There was something special in this reading, I learned about animals chosen to be sacrificed. If it was a newborn calf, a lamb, or a kid G-d stated that the animal had to be with their mother for seven days. After the seven days were over, that animal could be chosen to be sacrificed to G-d. G-d made it clear to the Jewish people, that no one was to slaughter an animal and its offspring as well on the same day. I found a source through [aish.com](https://www.aish.com) that explains the importance of separating the baby animals from their mother. Someone went to a farm and expected to see these baby calf animals suckle from their mother. Instead, the farmers were feeding the animals using baby bottles. For the person watching this, it felt like the farmers didn't know what they were doing. In reality they had reasons for what they were doing that looked odd.

One thing I learned is that cows only produce as much milk as their calves are able to suckle. The baby animal will mature and eventually weans itself off suckling. That causes the mother to slowly produce less and then it is useless as a milk cow. The farmers take the baby animal away from their mother pretty much right away after they have been born. When the visitor at the farm asked the farmer why not let them suckle from their mother a few more days before taking it away? The farmer said they had tried to do that and one of the animals started crying. No one wants a crying animal. In the farm's case it is usually the mother animal. The mother animal starts to cry because its baby has not been weaned off yet. When this has happened at the farm, the mother animal cries constantly and the farmers feel awful. This story is related to the parsha, because G-d wanted the Jews to separate the baby animals from their mothers only after a week had gone by.

In order to make the young animal cry, we had to take it away from its mother. It would cause the mother animal to cry. I read this several times, trying to understand why a loving G-d would want the mother animal to cry? G-d wanted to hear these cries. We learn from the Talmud that the mother cow has a desire to give more to the baby animal than the calf really needs. It's why the mother is crying so much and not her baby. For humans the crying is a message: "To be

aware of a great principle of existence. Meaning, it is more important to give something to someone than having a desire to take. For the baby animal, it doesn't matter where its food the milk comes from, just as long as they get nourishment. Between the parent and the child, it's always the parent that needs their child instead of the other way around.

There's a story of a Jew approaching his Rabbi asking to use milk for the passover seders? The Rabbi realized on his own that this man didn't have the funds to afford wine. He gave the man an answer and sent him on his way. The Rabbi asked his assistant to deliver some funds for this man, at first the assistant didn't know why since the man didn't ask for anything. The Rabbi told him, that's part of the whole point. This man does not have the funds for wine and cannot enjoy Passover as he and his family should. I want him to enjoy it so I want to do something for him, but I don't want him to know it was me. The Rabbi did not care about getting the credit for doing this.

In our generation we do not have sacrifices to give to G-d anymore. We have replaced that with praying to Him. When we pray, we must realize that the G-d Whom we are reaching out to wants to give us more than we are willing to take. It's hard to swallow all of these words and feel like you are on the same page as G-d.

I wrote a haftarah for Emor which is this week's parsha. The haftarah is in the book of Ezekiel. I don't know if this is all accurate, but it's how I understood it. It's from a chabad website. If you could tell me what you think.

Haftarah Emor Ezekiel Chapter 44

The parshah Emor explains about the rules for the Kohanim. We learned in Emor that the Kohanim had been designed to be the backbone of holiness for the Jewish people. The haftarah found in Ezekiel will help explain the concepts that were laid forth in the parsha Emor. Twenty-five years have passed since the prophet, Ezekiel and the Jewish people have been exiled in Babylon. Fourteen years have gone by since the holy temple was destroyed. The remaining Jews were sent to their homeland, Israel. At this point, the Jewish people were feeling pretty rejected and lacked hope in G-d. In that year, on the day of Yom Kippur G-d sent an angel to speak to Ezekiel. He gave him a long explanation of how the holy temple would be rebuilt again. There were a lot of laws G-d had implemented for the Jewish people to follow. The Jewish people were going to start new lives in this new holy temple.

The haftarah does not directly mention how the Jewish people are now counting the Omer. It's in parshah Emor, that we learn the entire goal of leaving Egypt was for the Jewish people to receive the Torah. Since we have celebrated Passover, now we are waiting for the holiday of Shavuot. Shavuot is the celebration of the Torah. G-d wanted the people to turn over a new leaf in their lives, but He wanted them to always remember that they did sin in the past. G-d had forgiven the Jewish people, but could never forget. If the Jewish people would return to G-d and His ways, He would help them rebuild a new temple.

Once the Jewish people had in mind an idea of what this new temple would look like, Ezekiel explained what G-d wanted from the Kohanim. Ezekiel let the Jewish people know, if any Kohanim or Levite served illegitimately in the temple, they would instantly be banned. They

would not be able to provide any services there. Anyone who was a descendant of Tzadok, (a high priest that served in the temple when King Shlomo was alive) were always faithful to what they were doing as kohanim serving in the temple.

The Kohanim were on a higher spiritual level than the other Jews. G-d expected for them to teach other Jews around them laws from the Torah. They helped the shoftim (judges) settle different kinds of disputes that people had. G-d made it clear for the Kohanim to not eat meat from an animal or bird that had died on its own. This was meant for Jewish people around as well, and even to this day this rule remains. The reason for it, an animal had to be slaughtered in the right way so it would be considered kosher. That was the only kind of meat Jews would eat. Another thing we learn in this haftarah is, the Kohanim gave so much of their time in the holy temple. One may think, they were closer in their relationship with G-d than another Jew who was not a kohen. With that in mind, G-d expresses to the kohanim that they will not inherit a share of farmland in Israel. The reason for this was, G-d is their share. When the other Jews would receive their share of farmland from Israel it was a gift from the Torah that G-d was giving them.