



Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat May 10, 2008 / Iyar 5, 5768

Parashah #31

Torah: *Emor* (Speak/say), *Vayikra* (Leviticus) 21.1-24.23

Haftorah: *Yechezk'el* (Ezekiel) 44.15-31

Suggested Messianic Writings: Luke 14.12-24

Shalom,

Adonai now speaks to the *Kohanim* (Priests) in our reading this week. Whereas in the previous Parashah the entire congregation of Israel was spoken to, here the first nine verses are to the Kohanim in general, and verses 10-15 are to the *Kohen Gadol*, the High Priest. Just as a reminder to get us up to speed, all kohanim were from the tribe of Levi, but not all of the *Levi'im* (Levites) were kohanim. A Kohen was a descendant of *Aharon* (Aaron).

The topic dealt with initially in the reading is that of the most common truth of life – physical death. Death is a result of sin, a result of the fall of mankind. Death is an abomination, therefore, to HaShem, and the kohanim were commanded to stay away from the dead body of a person, except in certain situations. According to *B'Midbar* (Numbers) 19.11, contact with a corpse made a person “unclean” for seven days. The rules were stricter for a Kohen Gadol. A Kohen was only allowed to become “unclean” by coming in contact with the dead body of a close relative; a Kohen Gadol was not allowed near a dead body, not even his own parents. A part of this reason is that the Kohen Gadol was the only Kohen who went into the Holy of Holies, and had to remain as ritually clean as possible at all times. But there is more to it, as we will look at shortly.

Some may wonder if these types of rulings affect followers of Yeshua, whom are called “the King’s kohanim” in 2 *Kefa* (Peter) 2.9. Not at all, for Kefa is speaking of the spiritual level; *a believer does not become a physical Levite upon receiving salvation any more than he becomes a physical Jew*. A believer, a “spiritual Kohen,” is allowed to sit with the body of a dead parent or other close relative. You see, in the physical you remain whom you are, salvation does not affect that. A person can develop a Jewish “spiritual heart,” but his physical heart still pumps the blood of whoever his ancestors were. There is a distinction between the physical and the spiritual throughout Scripture, just as there is a distinction between Jew and Gentile, but sometimes the waters tend to become muddied by the stirrings of man, who overall can only see through a glass darkly. The Messianic movement is so new that many misunderstandings develop, both by Jewish people reconnecting with their roots, and by Gentiles, seeking to figure out their own spiritual connection with the olive tree.

And so while many of the commandments dealing with the *physical* acts of the kohanim may not pertain to us today, those commandments with regard to the *moral* and *spiritual* arenas do. Throughout the book of *Vayikra* *all* of the people – from the nation as a whole, on up to the Kohen and Kohen HaGadol¹, were commanded by HaShem, “You are to be holy, for I am holy.”

As I mentioned above, there is more to the fact that the Kohen Gadol could not come into contact with the dead body of even someone close, at least while in the service of the Temple. First of all, we understand that the role of Kohen HaGadol of Israel was a picture of our eternal Kohen Gadol, Yeshua. I have been leading a study at Or HaOlam on a book that has the most amazing and new paradigms regarding the centuries of suffering that the Jewish people have undergone. If I were to recommend one book this year, this is the one; *If You Be the Son of God, Come Down from the Cross*, by Julia Blum (rhymes w/ plum), a Messianic Russian Jewish author and minister. Julia and her husband Victor were both very highly educated in Russia, as far as I know prior to their acceptance of Yeshua, and they now lead a Messianic congregation in Israel. Julia writes of Isaac, Job and Lazarus and how they each are a picture of Israel, and just as these men suffered without understanding why – and none of the suffering had to do with punishment, but simply that each was chosen for a purpose – thus is the suffering of Israel. Blum’s conclusions are sometimes mind-boggling, maybe even *spirit*-boggling, but truly are very well thought out, prayed about, and are very Scripturally based. I would urge all who read this drash to consider purchasing the book. Pray in advance for the acceptance of some possible new paradigms. Available at holylandmarketplace.com.

Back to the Kohen Gadol. When the High Priest was ministering, he could not finish until his job was done, even if a parent passed away, because the holy anointing oil of G-d was upon him. This is the picture of HaShem. Isaac, Job, Lazarus – all experienced suffering, but the greater suffering was the love of HaShem, who had to restrain His hand until His plan for each was accomplished, because the Holy Oil, the *Ruakh*

(Spirit) of G-d was at work. Even when faced with sorrow, a Kohen Gadol of ancient Israel had to finish his task, all the while restraining his sorrow and tears. Have you ever given thought to the suffering that Yeshua Himself had to go through, as Lazarus suffered to the point of death, and He could not go to him just yet, but had to restrain Himself? Why was Yeshua held back? For His *talmidim* (disciples): “That you may believe...;” and for those people around Bethany, “That they may believe...” Why did Lazarus have to suffer? For the completion of HaShem’s plan for that moment. A very important point to realize is that a person’s suffering may not necessarily have anything to do with them personally, i.e., suffering is most times probably not punishment for sin. Sometimes a person’s suffering is part of HaShem’s plan only for the sake of reaching those around that person. “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been His counselor?” (Isaiah 40.13; Romans 11.34).

Why does Israel suffer? Romans 11.11-12 are often mistranslated to speak of Israel’s “transgression,” that of corporately rejecting Yeshua as Messiah, and thus the church has mis-taught for centuries that this is Israel’s sin, and thus her suffering is her punishment. That teaching needs to be reconsidered. Zodiates points out that the Greek word, *paraptoma*, simply means, “a missing of that which is right, involving little guilt;” thus it is more accurate as Stern translates it in the CJB: “stumbling.” “It is by means of [Israel’s] *stumbling* that deliverance has come to the Gentiles;” and, “If their *stumbling* is bringing riches to the world...” Israel was chosen to be a light to the world, to reflect the light of G-d to the Gentile world. This they have done to one degree or another, often without knowing it, just as the moon reflects the sun without knowing a thing about it. The world has always seen Israel as “different, set apart,” unfortunately most often through hate-filled eyes. Had the world accepted the G-d that was shining off of Israel, the world could have turned out to be a different place entirely. Had the church seen that the Light they “stole” was indeed shining off of the backs of Israel, then church and Judaic history could have turned out for the better a long time ago. “Do not be arrogant toward the branches...” Sha’ul wrote to Gentile believers in Romans 11.18. “You Gentiles have now obtained mercy through [Israel’s] disobedience... by showing them the same mercy that God has shown you, it may now receive God’s mercy” (Romans 11.30-31).

So when you picture the suffering that Israel has had to undergo, realize that this plan was pronounced long ages ago. Just as a Kohen Gadol had to suffer and continue with his task until finished, so *Avinu Shebashamayim*, our Father in Heaven, suffers along with His chosen people, and will do so until His plan is finished. He loves all people, and suffers when all of His people suffer, but especially Israel, who were chosen for the task. Seldom do you hear of anyone giving thought to the suffering of the Father, to the tears He sheds, to the sorrow of His heart, all the while restraining Himself until His plan is accomplished. As to *why* HaShem’s plan is like this, we will never fully understand until Yeshua returns to teach the full depths of Torah to us. When Gentile believers who are seeking truth come to understand Israel’s calling, and rather than ignore them, claim to replace them, or claim to *be* them, but instead stand alongside Israel as Gentile believers are supposed to do, then I would say that to me, as I have been studying this out, this is what the “fullness of the Gentiles” truly is. Only then will Israel become jealous and finally recognize her Messiah. I believe that Israel has unduly suffered for too long because the Gentile nations on the whole ignored the call of G-d. It’s time for a change.

שְׁלוֹמֵ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לְכֹל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
Sh’alu shalom Yerushalayim – Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

B'rakhot v'todah rabbah
(Blessings & thank you very much)

Mordekhi

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you into heaven, will come back to you in just the same way as you saw him go into heaven.
(Acts 1.11 CJB)

¹ Ha means “the.”