

Mordekhai's Drash for Shabbat May 5, 2007

Parashah #31: Emor (Speak! / Say!), Vayikra (Leviticus) 21:1-24:23

Haftarah: Yekhez'el (Ezekiel) 44:15-31

Suggested Messianic Writings reading: Yochanan (John) 7:37-39

Shalom,

The first two chapters of the Parashah deal with the holiness of the kohanim (priests). These commandments come directly from Adoni. Seven times in these two chapters, He emphasizes, "I am Adoni." Six times, speaking of or to the kohanim, He declares, "I am Adoni, who makes you / them holy." We must keep this in mind if we truly believe the words of Kefa (Peter) in 1 Kefa 2:9, "You are... the King's kohanim...." And Yeshua Himself told us, in Mattityahu (Matthew) 28:20, to "obey everything that I have commanded you..."? Do we believe Yeshua to be Messiah and G-d of Israel, a member of the mysterious ekhad of G-d? If we are His kohanim, then we are to be holy, for He is holy.

As a Messianic Gentile, the more I study Torah, I see how much the Gentile Church has missed, because 1700 some years ago the Church on the whole de-Judaized, and the "Old Testament" became a history book. We read the rules for Gentile converts [to the Jewish Messiah, by the way] in Acts 15:19-20, and joyously proclaimed, "Hallelujah! We are free from the bondage of the Jewish law!" But we missed the next verse, Acts 15:21, which essentially says, "You Gentiles don't know about or understand the words of Moshe [Torah] yet, so start going to an assembly and learn them."i And when you begin to understand Torah, you come to understand it is not bondage at all. Torah is freedom. He whom the Son sets free is free indeed. There need not be a "New Testament vs. Old Testament" syndrome.

I can say this because I was in the same boat. We really had no understanding of the Holy Days, of the Jewish/Abrahamic roots of this faith, or of Torah itself. When a distortion has been taught from generation to generation for over a millennium and a half, few thought or even knew to question anything. It was just "what Gentiles do is different because it's 'New Testament.'" I guess it's like the person who, when asked, "What is the difference between 'ignorance' and 'apathy'?" replied, "I don't know, and I don't care!"

Israel was to be the light to the world, proclaiming Torah to all. They did somewhat, but have not yet finished the job. We should be praying constantly for the salvation of "all" of Israel, just as Sha'ul did 2000 years ago. Bitter and darker days are coming for the Jewish people and the followers of Yeshua. Israel needs her Messiah; Israel needs the power and wisdom of the Ruakh HaKodesh.

So, in Vayikra 23:1, Adoni tells Moshe to tell Israel, "The designated times of Adoni which you are to proclaim as holy convocations are *My* designated times" [emphasis mine]. Proclaim to whom, each other only? Or to the world? And notice, Adoni calls them *My* designated times, not Jewish designated times, or Israel's designated times, or anything else. These are commanded days to observe from the mouth of the Creator Himself. Thankfully, Israel did guard the Holy Days and the Torah through the centuries, so that we are able to learn from Torah and tradition just how to observe the Festivals in our day.

Adoni said, "These are My designated times: Shabbat; Pesakh & the Festival of Matzah; Barley First Fruits; Counting of the Omer; Wheat First Fruits; Shavu'ot; Rosh HaShanah; Yom Kippur; Sukkot." These are all times of celebration – even the more somber day of Yom Kippur, for on that day we can celebrate forgiveness – and we are to rejoice in the G-d of our Salvation. Even for any who are not grain farmers, there are still methods with a spiritual purpose to observe the First Fruits. Of course, every festival has a spiritual purpose, each pointing specifically to some aspect of Messiah. Sukkot is to be an especially joyful day. Some believers understand the term "the Presence of Adoni" as found throughout the Tanakh to refer specifically to Yeshua, and on Sukkot we are commanded to celebrate "in the Presence of Adoni your G-d" for seven days (Vayikra 23:40). And it was on the last day of Sukkot that Yeshua called out during the celebration and offered "living water" to all who would believe in Him (Yochanan 7:37-39). That in itself is a cause for celebration.

We must continue to pray for the blinders to be removed from the heart of Israel, for Israel is so close, yet because of historical mistreatment by “[false] Christians” the Jewish people on the whole will not even consider Yeshua (although that is beginning to change). As an example of being so close, the ArtScroll commentary says that “redemption comes at Pesakh; then the purpose of redemption at Shavu'ot; and then the lessons of the above come into our lives at Sukkot.” Redemption, the purpose of redemption, the lessons of redemption. Perhaps we could coin something “Messianically” and look at these as “the three R's – Redemption, Regeneration, Regulation.” Please, Abba, open the eyes of the Jewish people to their Messiah Yeshua! Is now not the time?

Quite obviously the Gentile Church on the whole is not going to jump into observing the festivals, although I think they are missing out when they don't. Many churches are catching on, however; believers globally are beginning to observe the festivals at home or in a smaller group setting; more and more are going to Israel to do so. The Ruakh is moving and working on the earth. The holy days were designed as a means for mankind to honor our Creator. Even the lesser and later added festivals such as Purim and Hannukah can cause us to honor our Creator; they are not designated times in the Torah, but are apparently Adoni-approved. My preference now is to observe “the Designated times of HaShem” rather than “the substituted times of man”.

None of this is said to belittle Christians and Christianity, for there are many Christians who have a much stronger faith in the L-rd than I may ever have; however, I do believe that the Gentile Church is missing out on many blessings because Israel and the Jewish people are too often overlooked, ignored, or criticized; same for the Designated Times of Adoni and the goodness of Torah.

The Parashah ends with the punishment of a man who cursed, using the Sacred Name [Y-H-V-H]. The Hebrew itself says that he used HaShem, the Name, in a curse. The Hebrew root word for “curse” here is kah-lahl, which essentially means “to make light of, to mock”. This is the same word that is used in B'reshet (Genesis) 12:3, regarding those who “curse--mock, make light of” Avraham and his descendants. This is why the Jewish people do not pronounce the Name, for who knows exactly what “making light of” means in the eyes of G-d? The actual pronunciation is pretty much unknown, and Asher Intrater had an excellent teaching on the subject a couple of weeks ago. I prefer to honor those of Jewish/Israeli descent who choose not to say or write the Name, and substitute “Adoni” or “HaShem”.

From the Haftarah, in Yekhez'el (Ezekiel) 44:15-31, we read of the Kohanim who will serve in the new Temple. These are the descendants of Tzadok (Zadok). The faithful Tzadok line was initially torn from the role of Kohen HaGadol (High Priest) during the rule of Rome and the reign of the Herods. Physical descendants of Tzadok may be the ones actually having charge in the new Temple, or perhaps Yeshua has His own designated “descendants of Tzadok”. One day “[we] shall know fully...” (1 Corinthians 13:12). Sha'alu shalom Yerushalayim!

It must be noted that there is no Greek word for “church”, which then is a mis-translation in any Bible. Jewish and Gentile believers met together in what is called in Hebrew a kahal, meaning a community, meeting, gathering or assembly. The Greek words used to translate kahal were either ekklesia or sunagoge. Neither word had a religious meaning or connotation at the time or were connected with any particular people group; “church” is not a translation of ekklesia. “Church” was first inserted in an English Bible, the Geneva Bible, in 1560. The KJV used the word because the King of England ordered the translators to do so. For much more information, see the book Copernicus and the Jews by Daniel Gruber, available from Elijahnet.org.

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

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