

# Shavua Tov

Weekly  Parsha

A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary  
By Glenn McWilliams

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Torah Portion: *Emor* אָמַר

“Say”

**God told Moses to declare the following to Aaron's descendants, the priests:  
Let no [priest] defile himself by contact with the dead among his people**

**Vayomer Adonay el-Moshe emor el-hakohanim beney Aharon ve'amarta alehem lenefesh lo-yitama be'amav.**

Scripture for study:

*Vayikra* (Leviticus) 21:1 – 24:23

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Once again our portion focuses specifically upon teachings and instructions concerning the *cohanim*. There are two major underlying themes interwoven in this portion that I wish to focus upon. The first of these themes is HOLINESS and the second is RESPONSIBILITY. Understanding the relationship between these two concepts is at the very heart of this Torah portion. Let us begin by first establishing a working definition of the word HOLY.

The word most often translated as “holy” is the Hebrew word *kodesh* (Kof, Dalet, Shin). According to a number of Biblical Hebrew Dictionaries and Lexicons, this Hebrew root and its subsequent cognates may be defined as “separated,” “set apart,” “holy,” “sacred,” “clean,” “pure,” “consecrated,” “devoted,” “hallowed,” “appointed,” “dedicated,” and possibly as “forbidden” or “prohibited.”<sup>1</sup> W. Kornfeld adds to the definition by contrasting the word *kodesh* with its antonym *chol* <sup>2</sup>(Chet, Lamed), which means “polluted,” “defiled,” “dishonored,” “wounded,” or “common.”<sup>3</sup> Taking this definition by contrast even further,

*“M. Eliade suggests that every definition of the phenomenon ‘religion’ has its own way of showing that the sacred and the religious life are the opposites of the profane and secular life. G. Van der Leeuw defines the ‘Holy’ or ‘Sacred’ as what has been placed within boundaries, the exceptional (Latin Sanctus)...whoever is confronted with potency clearly realizes that he is in the presence of some quality...which cannot be evoked from something else...According to K. Goldammer, people sense a qualitative distinction between the divine on the one hand and human beings and the world on the other.”<sup>4</sup>*

While many of the lexicographers and etymologists disagree over the exact etymology of the root word *kodesh*, the ancient Hebrew ideographs<sup>5</sup> do shed a great deal of light on the possible origins of this word. The first letter, Kof, has a couple of ideographs. According to Jeff Benner, Ancient Semitic letters which were originally oriented in a horizontal plane were eventually tilted to a vertical plane. While the present ideograph is depicted as a circle with a line extending through it vertically, Benner depicts it as originally being a circle with a line extending through it horizontally. In this horizontal expression the picture most likely depicts the sun either rising or setting. Thus this letter, according to Benner, can convey the concept of a cycle of the sun, or even condensing.<sup>6</sup>

Again, according to Jeff Benner this horizontal image evolved into a vertically oriented ideograph in the Middle Semitic script. Examples of Old Hebrew dating as early as 850 B.C.E. already demonstrate this ideograph in its vertical orientation. Dr. Frank Seekins pushes the use of the vertical orientation to the much earlier Proto-Canaanite Era. According to Dr. Seekins, not only did the direction of the letter's orientation change, but its meaning as well. In this orientation the picture is now a picture of the back of the head, and conveys the idea of something located at or left behind.<sup>7</sup>

The next ideograph is the Dalet, which is a picture of a door or tent flap, and may convey the meaning of coming and going or swinging back and forth. The final ideograph in our word *kodesh* is Shin, a picture of two shining teeth, which convey the meanings of teeth, sheen, bite, devour, destroy, and press down. We should mention here that the last two letters, Dalet and Shin (sometimes spelled with Vav *cholam* between them), spell the word *dosh*, which is translated as "threshing." Threshing is part of the process of grain production. The wheat or barley harvest is brought to a threshing floor, where it is then beaten with flailing instruments. The repeated swinging BACK AND FORTH of the flailing tools is represented by the ideograph Dalet. The pressure of the flailing strikes PRESSING down and DESTROYING the grain husks is represented by the Shin. This flailing releases the grain, which is then thrown into the air so that the wind would separate and blow the husk or chaff away from it. This process is known as *dosh*, or "threshing." If the ideograph Kof is a picture of the back of the head and implies something left behind, then we may translate our word *kodesh* as being "that which is left behind after the threshing."

From this simple ideograph we may see how the word "holy" and its many definitions may have emerged. The idea that "holy" means to be "separate" is depicted in the separation of the wheat from the chaff. The same is true of the concept that "holy" means "pure;" after the threshing is done the pure grain is left behind. That the word "holy" means "special" or "other than common" may be seen in the idea that when the threshing is done, the valuable part is what remains, while the wind takes the chaff away. This last idea is even more fascinating when we realize that the word for "Spirit" in both Hebrew and Greek can also mean "wind" and "breath."<sup>8</sup> Thus we may say that it is the Spirit that makes us holy. All of this imagery may help us to understand how we become holy. It is the Spirit of the Holy One that blows away all the chaff of the world from us. It is easy to understand how this concept may apply to us, but now we must ask how this definition applies to the Creator and true Holy One.

Within this process of separating the grain or seed from the chaff we witness the chaff being removed, leaving only the grain behind. As this description is applied to the Creator, we focus on the fact that there is no mixture in the Creator. It is not that anything was separated from Him, but that He is pure and without mixture. We should note here that Adam was created in the image of Elohim. Adam lived as the image of Elohim prior to his eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. From the very start, the Creator gave meaning, order, and substance to His creation through divisions and distinctions.

*Genesis 1:4 And Elohim saw the light, that it was good: and Elohim **divided** the light from the darkness.*

*Genesis 1:6 And Elohim said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it **divide** the waters from the waters.*

*Genesis 1:7 And Elohim made the firmament, and **divided** the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.*

*Genesis 1:11 And Elohim said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit **after his kind**, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. <sup>12</sup>And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed **after his kind**, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, **after his kind**: and Elohim saw that it was good.*

*Genesis 1:14 And Elohim said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to **divide** the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.*

*Genesis 1:18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to **divide** the light from the darkness: and Elohim saw that it was good.*

*Genesis 1:21 And Elohim created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, **after their kind**, and every winged fowl **after his kind**: and Elohim saw that it was good.*

*Genesis 1:24 And Elohim said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature **after his kind**, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth **after his kind**: and it was so. <sup>25</sup>And Elohim made the beast of the earth **after his kind**, and cattle **after their kind**, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth **after his kind**: and Elohim saw that it was good.*

Clearly YHWH ELOHIM created the universe without mixture. Man was likewise created in the image of YHWH, which is to say, without mixture.

*Genesis 1:26 And Elohim said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. <sup>27</sup>So Elohim created man in His own image, in the image of Elohim created He him; male and female created He them.*

The only thing that had mixed seed in the Garden of Eden was the prohibited tree of knowledge of good and evil. It is stated very emphatically that the day Adam would partake of the fruit of the tree of mixed seed, he would die.

*Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

This is not to imply that the fruit of this tree was poisonous to our flesh. This is not the story of Sleeping Beauty. To understand what is being taught in this verse we must first understand the definition of "Adam." The basic rule of thumb concerning biblical definitions is that the first use of the word provides the word's definition. The first use of the word "Adam" is in Genesis 1:26, connecting it directly to being created in the image of Elohim; thus we may say that to be "Adam" is to be in the image of Elohim. What does this mean? It means that Adam was not to have mixture. When he ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree of mixed seed, Adam, as defined by the image of Elohim, died. No more would man be in the true image of Elohim. From this we should understand that the image of YHWH ELOHIM is pure and without mixture; there is no chaff. This characteristic is again affirmed in the covenant prohibition against adding to or diminishing from the self-revelation of YHWH.

*Deuteronomy 4:2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of YHWH your Elohim which I command you.*

*Deuteronomy 12:32 What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.*

When Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of good and evil, he too became mixed seed. Here we should remember that the seed is the Word.

*Luke 8:11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of Elohim.*

When Adam was the image of Elohim, he embodied and was the pure Word of Elohim. Upon eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil Adam began listening to another voice and word; that of his own reason. It is this mixed seed that caused man to desecrate the name and image of the Creator. After the fall Adam's eyes were opened, and he would learn from his senses. Adam would use this sensually gained knowledge to judge the Word of Elohim. By adding his own word to the Creator's Word, Adam defiled the revelation of YHWH ELOHIM. This defiled image has brought forth after its kind and birthed numerous false religions. The world is corrupted by this mixed seed (word) of religion and idolatry. It is within the context of this polluted, defiled, corrupted world of idols and false elohim that YHWH has called out the children of Israel to be His HOLY people. At Mount Sinai YHWH called the children of Israel to become His precious treasure, a HOLY NATION, and a kingdom of *cohanim*.

*Exodus 19:5* Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: <sup>6</sup>And ye shall be unto Me **a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation**. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

At Mount Sinai the children of Israel were asked to be the bearer of YHWH ELOHIM'S unadulterated self-revelation – the Torah. At Mount Sinai Israel was asked to put off the chaff, the mixed seed of fallen reason, and simply live according to the pure Word of Elohim without additions or diminutions. At Mount Sinai Israel was asked and agreed to be holy as YHWH Himself is holy.

*Exodus 22:31* And ye shall **be holy** men unto Me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.

*Leviticus 11:44* For I am YHWH your Elohim: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall **be holy**; for **I am holy**: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. <sup>45</sup>For I am YHWH that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your Elohim: ye shall therefore **be holy, for I am holy**.

*Leviticus 19:2* Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall **be holy: for I YHWH your Elohim am holy**.

*Leviticus 20:7* Sanctify yourselves therefore, and **be ye holy**: for I am YHWH your Elohim.

*Leviticus 20:26* And ye shall **be holy unto Me: for I YHWH am holy**, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be Mine.

*Leviticus 21:6* They shall **be holy** unto their Elohim, and not profane the name of their Elohim: for the offerings of YHWH made by fire, and the bread of their Elohim, they do offer: therefore they shall **be holy**. <sup>7</sup>They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his Elohim. <sup>8</sup>Thou shalt sanctify him therefore; for he offereth the bread of thy Elohim: he shall **be holy** unto thee: for **I YHWH, which sanctify you, am holy**.

*Deuteronomy 14:2* For thou art an **holy people** unto YHWH thy Elohim, and YHWH hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

*Deuteronomy 14:21* Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an **holy people** unto YHWH thy Elohim. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

*Deuteronomy 26:19* And to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest **be an holy people** unto YHWH thy Elohim, as He hath spoken.

*Deuteronomy 28:9* YHWH shall establish thee **an holy people** unto Himself, as He hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of YHWH thy Elohim, and walk in His ways.

*1 Peter 1:15* But as **He** which hath called you **is holy**, so be ye **holy** in all manner of conversation; <sup>16</sup>Because it is written, **Be ye holy; for I am holy**.

Please take note of the fact that we, as the children of Israel, are to be holy, or free of chaff and mixture of word, because our Creator, Deliverer, Redeemer, and Savior is free of chaff and mixture, and we have agreed to be the bearer of His image. Thus only by living by the unpolluted Word of the Holy One are we able to embody His revelation and image in the world around us.

This brings us to our second theme – that of responsibility. We need to be very clear at this point that all of those who were brought out of Egypt gathered around the base of Mount Sinai and bound themselves by oath to living the unadulterated Word of YHWH ELOHIM. All of the children of Israel are therefore responsible for keeping the Torah.

*Exodus 19:8* And all the people answered together, and said, All that YHWH hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto YHWH.

*Exodus 35:1* And Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These are the words which YHWH hath commanded, that ye should do them.

*Deuteronomy 31:12* Gather the people together, men and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear YHWH your Elohim, and observe to do all the words of this law.

The children of Israel are responsible for being the image of YHWH in the world. We are to accomplish this ominous and awesome task by giving tangible, substantial, and physical life to the Torah. As YHWH is living, so must His image be living; therefore we are to be the bearer of this living image. It is impossible to overemphasize the weight and importance of this calling. The psalmist declares that YHWH has not given His Torah to any other nation or people.

*Psalms 147:19* He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. <sup>20</sup>He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye YHWH.

While we may indeed praise YHWH for this honor, we must recognize that by declaring ourselves to be the children of Israel, we are agreeing to carry out this responsibility and live to a greater degree of accountability to the Holy One who has blessed us with this honor. We should also recognize the great cost of our failure to keep our promise. If we are the ones chosen to bear the name and image of YHWH, whatever we say and do is a direct reflection upon the Holy One. If we add to or subtract from the revelation of YHWH we distort,

desecrate, destroy, defile, corrupt, and pollute the image of YHWH ELOHIM. When we distort or corrupt the image of YHWH we are guilty of blasphemy and idolatry, but possibly the worse sin is that we lead the world astray. Our calling as the children of Israel is not a calling of privilege for our own sake. We have been called for the sake of the world.

I am often asked if keeping Torah is a salvation issue. My answer is “Most definitely!” What needs to be understood, however, is that we do not keep the Torah for our own redemption. This has been accomplished already by grace through Yeshua HaMashiach. We do keep the Torah for the sake of the salvation of the rest of the world. By our keeping the Torah the world may come to know the true Creator, Deliverer, Redeemer, and Savior. We therefore carry the responsibility of bringing the Word of YHWH to life that the world may see, hear, experience, and know the power, love, grace, compassion, justice, righteousness, and holiness of YHWH ELOHIM.

To help the children of Israel succeed in this calling YHWH called out from among them a family of *cohanim* to serve as teachers and examples. It was the responsibility of the *cohanim* to teach the children of Israel the distinctions between that which is *tahor*<sup>9</sup> and that which is *tamei*.<sup>10</sup>

*Leviticus 10:10 And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; <sup>11</sup>And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which YHWH hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.*

Understanding these distinctions is essential to the duty of the *cohanim*. While generally translated as “clean” and “unclean,” *tahor* and *tamei* are two realms or states of being. The word *tahor* (clean) is a designation of being acceptable and useful for being the image of Elohim. The word *tamei* (unclean) is a designation of being unacceptable or useless for being the image of Elohim. Let me give a quick example. In our current portion we learn that contact with the dead is cause for one to be declared in a state of *tamei*.

*Leviticus 21:1 And YHWH said unto Moses, Speak unto the priests the sons of Aaron, and say unto them, There shall none be defiled for the dead among his people.*

*Leviticus 21:11 Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother.*

*Leviticus 22:4 What man soever of the seed of Aaron is a leper, or hath a running issue; he shall not eat of the holy things, until he be clean. And whoso toucheth any thing that is unclean by the dead, or a man whose seed goeth from him.*

We have already stated that YHWH is a living Elohim. He cannot be embodied in stone, wood, gold, or paintings. The image of YHWH must likewise be living. Death has no part in the Living Elohim, therefore contact with the dead renders one unfit for being the image of the living Elohim. It is not a matter of contracting something from the dead. Contact with death tends to change the focus of one’s heart and mind. If we are focused upon the shock and horror of death, we are not fully focused on being the image of YHWH. Death is also the wages of sin,

therefore contact with death is likewise contact with sin. Sin likewise renders us unfit to be the image of Elohim.

Briefly let me note that in this last passage a man whose seed goes out from him, whether through intercourse or masturbation, is also rendered *tamei*, or unacceptable for being the image of Elohim. This is so because the seed of a man is potential life. Even in the instance where there is conception, only one seed out of millions becomes life. The rest of the seeds are potential life lost, which belongs to the realm of death. While there may indeed be certain health benefits to quarantining someone who has been in contact with the dead, these distinctions are spiritual and not medical.

Let me also note that the condition of being *tamei* is not permanent.

*Leviticus 22:6* The soul which hath touched any such shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water. <sup>7</sup>And when the sun is down, he shall be clean, and shall afterward eat of the holy things; because it is his food.

In most, though not all, instances there is a brief period of separation, which is remedied by washing in water and waiting until the evening. There is powerful symbolism contained in these instructions. Water is often a symbol of the Torah. The evening is also the beginning of the new day, which can be a reference to the Messianic era. The way to be restored to acceptability and usefulness as the image of Elohim is to immerse oneself in the water of the Word, the Torah, and to strive to enter the reign of Messiah! The purpose of these statutes and ordinances is to help us learn to make distinctions between what belongs to the image of Elohim and what does not; what is wheat and what is chaff. It is the responsibility of the *cohanim* to teach these distinctions to the children of Israel.

We must recognize that unlike today, parents and teachers were not blessed with text books, lesson planners, online correspondence courses, or public schools. The primary means and method of teaching was by modeling. In other words, the children of Israel would learn the Torah by watching others live it and by living it themselves. For the children of Israel to be able to communicate the character and essence of YHWH ELOHIM to the world around them, they too needed to see Him, know Him, and experience Him. The responsibility of the *cohanim* was to assure that this was always possible; thus their primary obligation was to live at the highest possible spiritual and moral level, making the standard of holiness or wholeness much higher for the *cohanim*.

The second responsibility of the *cohanim* was to serve at the altar of YHWH, receiving and dressing the offerings and sacrifices of the children of Israel that they might continue to draw near to the Holy One of Israel. By serving in this capacity the *cohanim* assured that the children of Israel remained connected to their Elohim and partners in the covenant. By keeping the children of Israel conscious of YHWH'S holiness, the *cohanim* inspired them to likewise strive to live at a higher spiritual level, discerning what is wheat and what is chaff in their own lives, walks, and testimonies.



Because of the close association of the *cohanim* to the altar and the Holy One of Israel, it was of the utmost importance that their walk be perfect before the eyes of YHWH and the children of Israel. It is for this reason that a *cohen* who was not perfect physically or spiritually was not allowed to serve at the altar. It must be understood that he was still considered a *cohen*, and could serve as a teacher and mentor; but he could not serve at the altar. The altar was understood to be an extension of YHWH'S character, and therefore everything that was offered upon it and everyone that served at it had to be perfect.

*Leviticus 21:16* And YHWH spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>17</sup>Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his Elohim. <sup>18</sup>For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, <sup>19</sup>or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, <sup>20</sup>or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scuroy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; <sup>21</sup>no man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of YHWH made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his Elohim. <sup>22</sup>He shall eat the bread of his Elohim, both of the most holy, and of the holy. <sup>23</sup>Only he shall not go in unto the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not My sanctuaries: for I YHWH do sanctify them. <sup>24</sup>And Moses told it unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel.

*Leviticus 22:17* And YHWH spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>18</sup>Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings, which they will offer unto YHWH for a burnt offering; <sup>19</sup>ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish, of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats. <sup>20</sup>But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you. <sup>21</sup>And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto YHWH to accomplish his vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein. <sup>22</sup>Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scuroy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto YHWH, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto YHWH. <sup>23</sup>Either a bullock or a lamb that hath any thing superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted. <sup>24</sup>Ye shall not offer unto YHWH that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall ye make any offering thereof in your land.

The *cohanim* would likewise protect the altar and the calendar, making sure that everything that YHWH commanded was done in its proper order and at its proper time. It was the *cohanim* who conducted all of the appointed sacrifices and offerings on behalf of the community of Israel. It was likewise the *cohanim* who made sure that Israel kept all of YHWH'S appointed rehearsals.

Here we should remember that the calling upon Israel to be the image of Elohim is a corporate matter. While each individual member of Israel willingly entered the covenant, the calling was upon the nation. It is as a people, not a person, that we embody the image of the living Elohim. Even these corporate sacrifices and Feasts are a part of YHWH'S self-revelation; therefore it is important that we perform these rites and rituals with the utmost care and consideration. The

*cohanim* play an integral part in the fulfillment of this holy calling, and carry upon them an incredible responsibility. We should note that this responsibility touches every part of a *cohen's* life: whom he marries, how he relates to his family, how he deals with death, and how he lives before the altar and Elohim. We should recognize the price paid to bear the honor of being a *cohen*, and especially the *Cohen Gadol*. We should note that even the wives and children of the *cohanim* are held to a higher standard of accountability.

*Leviticus 21:9* And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire.

In every aspect of their lives and service the *cohanim* and their families bear the burden of responsibility for protecting the image of YHWH ELOHIM, the Holy One of Israel.

*Leviticus 22:9* They shall therefore keep Mine ordinance, lest they bear sin for it, and die therefore, if they profane it: I YHWH do sanctify them.

We should recognize that within the teachings of this portion there is also a teaching of responsibility directed to the children of Israel. The *cohanim*, as is true also of the Levites, have no portion in the land. In other words, the *cohanim* and the Levites live from the table of YHWH. It is the *cohanim* and the Levites who eat the food of the altar. YHWH commanded the children of Israel that they must give a portion to the *cohanim*; therefore we find a powerful symbiotic relationship between the children of Israel and the *cohanim*. The children of Israel cannot fulfill their calling or draw near to YHWH without the *cohanim*, and the *cohanim* cannot live without the offerings, sacrifices, and tithes of the children of Israel.

In this system YHWH reminds us that we are indeed a body and a people. Just as we cannot add to or diminish from the Torah, the self-revelation of YHWH, neither should we diminish from His living revelation by neglecting our fellow members in the body. It was the apostle Shaul who may have best understood this whole concept.

*1 Corinthians 12:12* For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Messiah. <sup>13</sup>For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. <sup>14</sup>For the body is not one member, but many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? <sup>16</sup>And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? <sup>18</sup>But now hath Elohim set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. <sup>19</sup>And if they were all one member, where were the body? <sup>20</sup>But now are they many members, yet but one body. <sup>21</sup>And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. <sup>22</sup>Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: <sup>23</sup>And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. <sup>24</sup>For our comely parts have no need: but Elohim hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: <sup>25</sup>that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for

*another. <sup>26</sup>And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. <sup>27</sup>Now ye are the body of Messiah, and members in particular.*

At this present time, without the altar service functioning, it is truly difficult to know who the *cohanim* and the Levites are. I would suggest that at present it is those who are teaching us the Torah. The *cohanim* and the Levites are those who are helping us to learn what belongs to the self-revelation of YHWH and what does not. The *cohanim* and the Levites are those who are setting the example of holiness and righteousness, and are helping us fulfill our calling to be the image of YHWH ELOHIM. The *cohanim* and the Levites are those who teach us how to make the distinctions that lead to life. The *cohanim* and the Levites are those who stand at the ready before the Holy One that they may intercede for us and encourage us to avail ourselves of the mercies of YHWH and draw near to Him with true hearts.

I encourage you to remember that we have all been called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The office of *cohen* has been reserved for the biological descendants of Aaron; thus if you are not a Levite of the family of Aaron, you are not a *cohen*. We must remember, however, that the Aaronic priesthood was set apart to serve as an example and a teacher to the children of Israel. Our priesthood is of another order. While we may not be descendants of Aaron or members of the Aaronic priesthood, we are still called to be a priestly people. This means that we serve as Messiah did, in the order of the Melchizedek priesthood.

The Melchizedek priesthood is the calling upon all of Israel, including Aaron's descendants, to be the teachers and examples of holiness to the world. It is important for us to realize that our calling is one of great responsibility, as well as of great honor. It is a calling of service; not privilege. YHWH has blessed us and honored us to be associated with His name and character. Let us be responsible with this calling and let the Spirit blow away the chaff and mixture in our lives. Let us be holy as YHWH our Elohim is holy, that the world may know Him.

SHAVUA TOV !

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<sup>1</sup> The Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew, Rabbi Matityahu Clark, Feldheim Publisher, Pg. 224; A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English, Ernest Klein, MacMillan Publishing, Pg. 563; The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words, James Strong, LL.D, S.T.D., Nelson Publishing, Pp. 777, 779-780; A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, William Gesenius, Oxford University Press, Pp. 871-874; The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Kornfeld, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Pp. 522-544.

<sup>2</sup> The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Kornfeld, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Pg. 522.

<sup>3</sup> A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, William Gesenius, Oxford University Press, Pp.320-321

<sup>4</sup> The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Kornfeld, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Pg. 522

<sup>5</sup> An ideograph is similar to a hieroglyph; it is a symbol or picture that conveys meaning.

<sup>6</sup> The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible, Jeff Benner, Virtualbookworm.com, Pg. 30

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew Word Pictures, Dr. Frank T. Seekins, Living Word Pictures Inc., Pp. 85-87

<sup>8</sup> In Hebrew the word is *Ruach* and in Greek it is *Pneuma*; both words mean "wind," "breath," and "spirit."

<sup>9</sup> *Tahor* is the Hebrew word usually translated as "clean."

<sup>10</sup> *Tamei* is the Hebrew word usually translated as "unclean."