

Emor אָמַר

Speak

“Hear, Obey, Walk”

Leviticus 21:1-24:23
Ezekiel 44:15-31

Emor or “Speak” continues the Book of Leviticus, and directs and enlightens us a great deal about the responsibility Messiah followers have to serve as priests in the world today. From the beginning chapters of Leviticus, the Torah’s code of behavior is intended to specifically set Ancient Israel apart from the other peoples around it in the Ancient Near East, and then the succeeding generations who would turn to Moses’ Teaching for guidance and direction. The previous Torah portion was appropriately named *Kedoshim* or “Holy Ones” (Leviticus 19:1-20:27), because the requirements for Israel to be a holy nation are laid forth. In *Emor*, God instructs Moses to deliver further instructions to the priests and the sons of Aaron,²⁴ the issue of flawless animals to be used in sacrifice is addressed,²⁵ the appointed times or Biblical holidays are listed,²⁶ instruction about the lamp burning in the sanctuary and its oil is detailed,²⁷ and finally the well known axiom of “an eye for an eye” in view of an incident of blasphemy is described.²⁸

Since Ancient Israel was originally called to be a Kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 17:18), it is important for us—by extension as Believers in Messiah Yeshua—to understand the responsibility that such a priestly calling carries. We are God’s representatives on Earth, and we must reflect who He is to others. A great duty rests upon us, *because we know who He is*, to communicate the good news of Yeshua’s salvation effectively. Consequently, it is not only incumbent upon us to “talk the talk,” but most importantly “walk the walk.” These expressions are useful because in this day and age, as lines of demarcation between the children of God and the followers of the enemy are being drawn, it is imperative that we stand up for what we know is right as embodied in the Holy Scriptures.

One of the most obvious ways we can see this accomplished is first by hearing God’s Word, and then by obeying it. This week one of the most visible ways, that Messianic Believers can tangibly do this, is to follow the prescriptions given to us in Leviticus 23. Here, we are introduced to the *moedim* (מוֹעֲדִים) or appointed times of the Lord. Many other times throughout the Torah, these same observances are mentioned in order to confirm that the Lord is very serious about His people following these commands. Leviticus 23 is not the only place in the Torah where instructions regarding the appointed times are listed. And, while many people associate the appointed times as just being various annual holidays, the first appointed time that God instructs His people to observe is actually the weekly Sabbath (cf. Exodus 31:13-17).

²⁴ Leviticus 23:1-22:16.

²⁵ Leviticus 22:17-33.

²⁶ Leviticus 23:1-44.

²⁷ Leviticus 24:1-9.

²⁸ Leviticus 24:10-23.

Once we can realize that the Sabbath rest is one of the primary signs we can demonstrate via our obedience to God, it should not be surprising at all to see it listed as the first appointed time in the list given in Leviticus 23:

“The LORD spoke again to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, **“The LORD’s appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations—My appointed times are these: For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation.** You shall not do any work; it is a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings. These are the appointed times of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them”’” (Leviticus 23:1-4).

As you continue reading Leviticus 23, other appointed times such as Passover and Unleavened Bread,²⁹ the Feast of Weeks,³⁰ the Feast of Trumpets,³¹ the Day of Atonement,³² and Feast of Tabernacles are listed.³³ In this time of significant growth and expansion for the Messianic movement, Jewish Believers who have recognized their Messiah are experiencing the appointed times in a way in which they were never able to when they had grown up, seeing Yeshua in the feasts. And for evangelical Christian Believers seeing the importance of their Hebraic and Jewish Roots, seeing the Messianic significance of the appointed times and how they portray the message of salvation, is most enriching and encouraging to them.

In this season of restoration, many are turning to the appointed times as they are wanting to know how Yeshua the Messiah actually lived while on Earth, and what some of the holidays were that He celebrated. Many are beginning to recognize the deep symbolism contained in each of the appointed times, and as a result the Messianic movement gets a little bigger each year, especially right after Passover. We have the responsibility as able Believers in Yeshua to demonstrate how wonderful it is to truly obey the Lord and be blessed by Him, because we celebrate the *moedim*. The action of observing the appointed times will often speak much louder than words.

This can be a challenge for some in the Messianic community, however, because many are spiritually immature and they often use the Biblical holidays as a time to demonstrate their “spiritual superiority” to their Christian brothers and sisters who do not keep them. The problem is that in spite of some of the arrogance of various Messianics, God still uses the Christian Church and there would be no Messianic movement if there were no institutional Church.³⁴ People still get saved today on Sunday morning in the name of Jesus! Over time, I believe that many of our Christian brothers and sisters will recognize that there is a better way, and turn to remembering the Lord’s appointed times—but much of that is contingent upon us as Messianics and what we do, demonstrating the value of the appointed times properly to them. I think the most important thing to remember is the

²⁹ Leviticus 23:5-14.

³⁰ Leviticus 23:15-22.

³¹ Leviticus 23:23-25.

³² Leviticus 23:26-32.

³³ Leviticus 23:33-44.

³⁴ Editor’s note: Equally problematic and disturbing are those Messianics who likewise do not wish to recognize the theological and spiritual heritage we have inherited from the Jewish Synagogue. This is most clearly evidenced by the adoption of so-called “Karaites” interpretations and views of the Torah, which disparage mainline Jewish tradition and culture.

admonition that Yeshua had for His Disciples when they saw someone who was casting out demons, without being a part of their inner circle:

“John said to Him, ‘Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us.’ But Yeshua said, ‘Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. **For he who is not against us is for us**” (Mark 9:38-40).

Yeshua was gently instructing His Disciples about how to deal with those who were doing various things in His name, and yet they were not doing things exactly like them. Yeshua told His Disciples, “Do not stop him” (NIV). In other words, He said to leave such people alone because God is the only One who can be the ultimate judge of anyone. Certainly, if God is the only One who can judge sinners, He is likewise the only One who can judge the heart intent of Christians who do things in ignorance without knowing any better. And which is worse, the sin of ignorance—not having enough information—or the sin of arrogance? Think about all of the Christians living in the third world who face death every day for believing in Jesus, and how some Messianics act as though Yeshua did not die for these people because they may not “keep Sabbath.” If you are a non-Jewish Believer in the Messianic community, consider your own position as one who was likely in the Church at one point in time, and did exactly the same things as some of those who are judged mercilessly. I remember hearing a popular voice one time, who said that he believed that Christians worship the sun god on Sunday morning, yet when he was in church he did not. How unfair a scale is this?

My friends, we must grow up and be more mature about just where we are in this hour. How much spiritual maturation must we go through, in addition to all of the theological and intellectual maturation that we have not even dealt with? Consider where you may have been half a dozen years ago. Many of you did not even know what the word *Torah* (תּוֹרָה) meant in Hebrew, or what the word *Shabbat* (שַׁבָּת) was.

I urge you to pray every day that the Lord transforms your heart and your mind to do good works, and demonstrate the great supernatural change He has enacted within you. Pray that you can experience all of who He is because of your obedience to Him, and that it shines brilliantly in the sinful world in which we live. Pray that He can use you as a means of grace to others, and you can demonstrate the true substance of the appointed times—Messiah Yeshua—to those who need to experience His salvation.

Let the appointed times of the Lord help set you apart, so that you can truly be a part of the kingdom of priests and holy nation that Israel is supposed to be. Recognize that we are all works in progress, and that each of us has a long way to go. Allow the Word of God to speak to you, so that you may truly reflect His love and mercy to others. **Then and only then will we become the set-apart people who can properly minister to Him and to others in all of its fullness!**