

Parashat Emor

Leviticus 21:1–24:23

May 8, 2020



SUMMARY

Emor means “speak.” G-d tells *Moshe* to speak to the *kohanim*, the priests, about what they should do to be extra holy so they can serve God as a *kohanim*. *Parashat Emor* also tells us about the special holidays of the Jewish calendar, which make time holy throughout the year. The holy days connect us with our people, the land, the seasons, and with God. The first holy day mentioned is *Shabbat*, the day of rest.

Then we learn about *Pesach* and *Shavuot*, followed by the fall holidays: *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, and *Sukkot*. *Parashat Emor* also includes the *mitzvah* of counting the *omer*. All of us are commanded to count the *omer*--the days between *Pesach* and *Shavu'ot*. All year long, the *Kohanim* at our Holy Temple, offered wheat to God. In a ceremony that happened every day from *Pesach* until *Shavuot*, an *omer* of barley (around a gallon) was added to the daily sacrifice. The *Kohanim* counted all of these days between *Pesach* and *Shavu'ot* for the Jewish People. Now we do the counting for ourselves. We count from the second day of Passover until just before *Shavuot*. That's 7 weeks of 7 days. 7 weeks x 7 days equals 49 days! The 50th day is *Shavuot*. Our rabbis taught the number of days of *sefirat ha'omer* is also the number of days from when we left Egypt to when we arrived at Mt. Sinai.

After teaching us about many of our holidays, the *Torah* gives the Israelites the rule that, when they enter the land of Israel, they should not harvest their fields all the way to the edges or pick up anything they have harvested that has fallen to the ground while they were harvesting.

These fruits, grains, and veggies are to be left for poor people and for people from other communities that have come to live with us.

From Our Commentators:

Sforno (c.1470 - 1550 CE), Italy, on Leviticus 23:22:

אני ה' אלהיכם אלהי הקוצרים ואלהי המלקטים הלקט והפאה לעניים ואיטיב למטיבים להם כדי לעשות רצוני

I am A-donai, your G!d--G!d of the harvesters and G!d of those who gather the gleanings and the corners, of the poor, and one who does good and makes things better for them in order that they may do my will.

FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) The *kohanim* would accept bundles of barley from each person who came to offer it as an *Omer* offering and wave it around in front of G!d for the person. There would be barley bundle, or “*Omer*” offerings every day between Passover and *Shavu'ot*. Why do you think the *kohen* would wave the barley around like this?
- 2) Why do you think that the Israelites were taught to wait and not eat ANY of the new wheat until after these 50 days between Passover and *Shavu'ot* had passed?
- 3) If just last week we were told not to harvest to the corners of our fields or to pick up pieces of harvest that had been dropped, why would the *Torah* repeat this rule this week and add the line, “leave it for the poor and for the immigrant. I am Adonai your G!d”?