

Emor Vayikra - Leviticus (21-24:23)

Moses listened as God told the special rules for the priests, including the High Priest, "Let no priest become unclean with corrupt actions. Each priest must be holy to his God. When making offerings, the priests are not to have any scab or scratches on their body and there shall be no blemish on the livestock. Tell the priests to not profane My holy Name but to sanctify Me. I, God, make you holy."

God said to Moses, "Now, speak to the Israelites and say to them, 'There are fixed times which you are to set aside as sacred holidays. *Six days you shall work and get tasks done. On the seventh day you must stop and observe a Sabbath of rest. In all your dwelling places, honor this weekly Sabbath to God.

* In the first month, on 14th, at twilight, it is time for the Passover Offering to God, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It shall last seven days. You shall do no work on the first and seventh day.

* When you reap the harvest in the land I will give you, give an Omer, a portion, to the priest. Then after seven complete Sabbaths (50 days), you shall make Shavuot offerings, which are leavened bread. Remember when reaping in your harvest, be sure to always leave some of your crops on the land for the poor man and the stranger who may be hungry. I am God, your Lord.

*In the seventh month, the first day is Rosh Hashanah, the head of the year, and it shall be a day of rest. It is a holiday of remembrance and the sounding of a ram's horn called a shofar. It is a day of no work and a fire offering shall be made.

* The 10th day shall be Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, for you. It is a sacred holiday of fasting and bringing a fire offering to God. Do no manner of work on this day, for this day is set aside to gain atonement before God, your Lord.

* The 15th day shall be the Sukkot Festival to God. This is an eight day festival. You are not work on either the first or last day. You are to take for yourself an etrog fruit of the citron tree, a date palm, myrtle branches, and willows of the brook and rejoice for seven days before God. You are to live in thatched huts, so future generations will know that I had the Hebrews live in huts when I brought them out of bondage in Egypt. I am God, your Lord."

So Moses told the Israelites all the laws of God's Sacred Meeting Times. The God said to Moses, "Instruct the Israelites to bring clear oil from olives that have been crushed by hand for lighting the Menorah lamp and to keep it burning continuously. Aaron shall light the Menorah and it shall burn before God from evening to morning, outside the Curtain protecting the Ark With the Commandments. This is an eternal law for all generations.

Then you shall make twelve showbreads from the finest grain flour and arrange them in two stacks, six loafs each on the gold table before God. Beside them, as a memorial portion, place pure frankincense for your fire offering to God. Do this every Sabbath. Aaron and his sons may eat the showbreads but only in a holy place. This is eternal law.

One who defiles God's Name or takes a human life must be put to death. One who kills an animal must pay its full value, a life for a life.

One who maims a neighbor must be penalized and make restitution as if inflicted by the same injury. Full compensation must be paid, fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. You shall have only one standard for both native born and convert for I, the Lord, am God."

Then Moses told the Israelites everything God had said and they followed God's command to kill the blasphemer who cursed and defiled God's Name.

Questions: 1) How do you feel when someone damns or defiles God's Name? Do you? 2) How important is it to compensate someone in full? 3) What is your favorite holiday and tradition?

Illustration ideas: The menorah lamp lighting...twelve showbreads on the gold table...priests eating in holy place...leaving some crops for the poor or stranger....