

We use cookies to ensure that we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this website without changing your cookie settings or you click "Accept" below then you are consenting to this. (<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/privacy-policy/>)

[ACCEPT](#) [Reject](#) [Privacy policy \(https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/\)](https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/)

liberal judaism



The dynamic, cutting edge of modern Judaism

(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/>)



News

Parashat Emor 5780

Rabbi Danny Rich – 8 May 2020

Parashat Emor (Leviticus 21:1-24:18) continues the theme of 'holiness' – what it means to be a 'holy nation and a kingdom of priests'. The Hebrew root, *kuf, dalet shin*, is about separation for a particular purpose. The Jewish people will be identified or separate from others because of its devotion to the One God reflected in its adherence to the moral precepts of the Holiness Code (laid out in Leviticus 19) and in its observance of the Jewish ritual way of life and, more particularly, the sacrificial system presided over by the priests.

The first two chapters of *Emor* are directed specifically at the cultic officials, the priests. The second deals with how the priests shall treat sacrifices while the first concerns itself with restrictions and limitations on the priesthood including contact with a corpse, unsuitable women to marry (divorcees and prostitutes) and even what disability prevents one officiating as a priest.

Chapter 23 discusses the concept of sacred time and establishes the cultic calendar of *Shabbat*, the three pilgrimage festivals of *Pesach*, *Shavuot* and *Sukkot*, and the *Tishri* days of *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*.



Privacy - Terms

The final chapter (24: 1-18) catalogues a miscellany of legislation: kindling the menorah, baking the 'bread of display', blasphemy, murder, and damage to livestock.

[ACCEPT](#) [Reject](#) [Privacy policy \(https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/\)](https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/)

I suspect that when you hear *parashat Emor* this week it will still be in extraordinary circumstances – week eight of 'lockdown'. In most cases your rabbi will be alone in his or her home or the synagogue and the congregation will be in their own homes, participating or observing via Zoom.

It strikes me as ironic that one of the criticisms of the ancient Temple and its priesthood was that much of the ritual was non-participatory, carried out by officiants whilst the majority simply watched. For technical reasons Zoom makes communal participation difficult – if not cacophonous – and so many of us find ourselves sitting in our homes observing our officiant – rabbinic or lay – doing it on our behalves.

Parashat Emor reminds us of the primacy of 'sacred time over sacred space' which Judaism evolved by circumstances if not design. Whatever worship looked like in Biblical times it took place in local shrines until at a given point in Jewish history the cult became centralised around the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temples, of course, were destroyed – the First by the Babylonian ruler, Nebuchanezzar II, in 586 BCE and that of Ezra and Herod (the Second Temple) by the Romans in 70CE. In their place arose a new institution – the synagogue – which, in accordance with the Hellenistic value of democracy, offered a more participatory style of worship with lay leadership elected and rabbinic authority accepted on the basis of knowledge as opposed to priestly male lineage.

We are, however, aware that one of the great strengths of Judaism is ritual at home: *Kabbalat Shabbat* and *seder I'pesach* being examples par excellence. We acknowledge further that a synagogue has no intrinsic 'sacredness'. A synagogue is defined by its uses as a *bayt tefillah*, *midrash* and/or *knesset*: a house of prayer, learning and meeting. *The modern miracle of zoom is that each of our homes can become a bayt tefillah, midrash and/or kneset if we use them such purposes.*

Zoom, however, requires a collective effort of at least two and maybe more and so we establish times for Zoom services, Zoom classes and Zoom 'chats' at which our interaction with members of our congregation and our teachers creates sacred time over great distances of space.

The institution of Shabbat and the cycle of Jewish festivals – whether on Zoom or at our shuls – are not about the space in which they are marked but about the time we choose to devote to them.

We use cookies to ensure that we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this website without changing your cookie settings, you are consenting to our Privacy policy (<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/>)

There will be a time when life returns to some normality and we shall then be able to gather again in our communal spaces. Yet, perhaps we have learnt by exceedingly high turnouts at virtual services, that for some the place where something takes place may be less important than the time and the fact that it does.

As a subscribing Luddite and a strong advocate of community, I can be proud of my new found abilities with Zoom, hope that our communities will continue with the streaming of services and yet crave for the time when I can be part of a physical and real minyan rather than its electronic, virtual equivalent.

RECENT COMMENTARIES

Parashat Balak 5780

1 JULY 2020 – 9 TAMMUZ 5780

(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/2020/07/parashat-balak-5780/>)

Parashat Chukkat 5780

24 JUNE 2020 – 2 TAMMUZ 5780

(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/2020/06/parashat-chukkat-5780/>)

Parashat Korach 5780

18 JUNE 2020 – 26 SIVAN 5780

(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/2020/06/parashat-korach-5780/>)

Parashat Shelach Lecha 5780

10 JUNE 2020 – 18 SIVAN 5780

(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/2020/06/parashat-shelach-lecha-5780/>)

 [Full Archive \(/news-views/thought-for-the-week/thought-for-the-week-archive/\)](/news-views/thought-for-the-week/thought-for-the-week-archive/)

SHARE THIS THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK



([mailto:?](mailto:)

subject=Thought

We use cookies to ensure that we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this website without changing your cookie settings or you click "Accept" below then you are consenting to this.

[ACCEPT](#) [Reject](#) [Privacy policy \(https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/\)](https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/)

for
the
Week

=

Parashat

Acharei

Mot-

Kedoshim

5780&body=Hi,

I

thought

you

might

enjoy

this!

Take

a

look

when

you

have

a

chance:

<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/>

We use cookies to ensure that we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this website without changing your cookie settings or you click "Accept" below then you are consenting to this.

ACCEPT Reject      **5780/**
Privacy policy (<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/>)

Related

[Blog] Don't stone the
blasphemer: Theology in
times of crisis
(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/dont-stone-the-blasphemer-theology-in-times-of-crisis/>)

Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei
5780
(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/vayakhel-pekudei-5780/>)

Parashat Korach 5780
(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/korach-5780/>)

Tags: [Judaism \(https://www.liberaljudaism.org/tag/judaism/\)](https://www.liberaljudaism.org/tag/judaism/), [Liberal Beliefs & Practices \(https://www.liberaljudaism.org/tag/liberal-beliefs-practices/\)](https://www.liberaljudaism.org/tag/liberal-beliefs-practices/).

© Copyright 2020 Liberal Judaism

All rights reserved. [Legal & Privacy \(/legal-privacy/\)](/legal-privacy/). **[Contact Us \(/contact/\)](/contact/)**.

[Press Enquiries \(/news-views/press-enquiries/\)](/news-views/press-enquiries/).

[Donate \(https://www.totalgiving.co.uk/donate/liberal-judaism-ulps\)](https://www.totalgiving.co.uk/donate/liberal-judaism-ulps).

Designed by [Yszi \(mailto:hawkingswebdesign@gmail.com\)](mailto:hawkingswebdesign@gmail.com).

A Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in England and Wales: 08281223

Charity Number: 1151090

Registered Office: The Montagu Centre, 21 Maple Street, London, W1T 4BE

We use cookies to ensure that we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this website without changing your cookie settings or you click "Accept" below then you are consenting to this.

ACCEPT Reject Privacy policy (<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/>)