

Leviticus 21

Verses 1-9

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them:

‘No one shall defile himself for a *dead* person among his people, ² except for his relatives who are nearest to him, his mother and his father and his son and his daughter and his brother, ³ also for his virgin sister, who is near to him because she has had no husband; for her he may defile himself. ⁴ He shall not defile himself as a relative by marriage among his people, and so profane himself. ⁵ They shall not make any baldness on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuts in their flesh. ⁶ They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God, for they present the offerings by fire to the Lord, the food of their God; so they shall be holy. ⁷ They shall not take a woman who is profaned by harlotry, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for he is holy to his God. ⁸ You shall consecrate him, therefore, for he offers the food of your God; he shall be holy to you; for I the Lord, who sanctifies you, am holy. ⁹ Also the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by harlotry, she profanes her father; she shall be burned with fire.

Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them:

This applied to Aaron’s two sons Eleazar and Ithamar and the sons in their family lines.

No one shall defile himself for a *dead* person among his people, ² except for his relatives who are nearest to him

His nearest relatives included, his mother and father, son and daughter, brother, and virgin sister.

His wife is not stated because it was obvious that she was included since she was closer than his father or mother.

He shall not defile himself as a relative by marriage

No in-laws were included as close relatives.

They shall not make any baldness on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuts in their flesh

All of these things were forbidden to any Israelite

See Leviticus 19:28

For they present the offerings by fire to the Lord, the food of their God

Animal sacrifices were called the food of God but this language was metaphorical.

Just as when Christ said that Christians should eat his flesh and drink his blood.

They shall not take a woman who is profaned by harlotry, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for he is holy to his God

God expects a higher standard from those who serve in his house. No man is without sin but men of the cloth were seen as teachers of the people.

Also the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by harlotry, she profanes her father; she shall be burned with fire.

The normal punishment for harlotry was stoning. In this case, she would be stoned and then burned with fire

Verses 10-15

¹⁰ ‘The priest who is the highest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes; ¹¹ nor shall he approach any dead person, nor defile himself *even* for his father or his mother; ¹² nor shall he go out of the sanctuary nor profane the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is on him; I am the Lord. ¹³ He shall take a wife in her virginity. ¹⁴ A widow, or a divorced woman, or one who is profaned by harlotry, these he may not take; but rather he is to marry a virgin of his own people, ¹⁵ so that he will not profane his offspring among his people; for I am the Lord who sanctifies him.’

The priest who is the highest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been consecrated to wear the garments

The High Priest had the anointing oil poured on his head while the lesser priests had the oil sprinkled on their garments.

Shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes; ¹¹ nor shall he approach any dead person, nor defile himself *even* for his father or his mother;

Tearing of the clothes was a sign of mourning.

Any touching of a dead body, or mourning for a loved one, was denied to the high priest

The rules for the High Priest were stricter than for the regular priests

Caiaphas tore his garments when Jesus testified that he was the Son of God

See Matthew 26:15

However, what Caiaphas did was not wrong because he was not doing it as a sign of mourning for a dead relative.

Nor shall he go out of the sanctuary nor profane the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is on him

The High Priest did not live in the sanctuary.

What is meant is that he could not interrupt his duties even if his parents died.

But rather he is to marry a virgin of his own people, ¹⁵ so that he will not profane his offspring among his people

Marriage with widows, divorced women, or harlots was forbidden.

And she had to be a Levite.

If the High Priest married outside the Levitical family his sons would have been disqualified from service in the tabernacle

Verses 16-24

¹⁶ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁷ “Speak to Aaron, saying, ‘No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the food of his God. ¹⁸ For no one who has a defect shall approach: a blind man, or a lame man, or he who has a disfigured *face*, or any deformed *limb*, ¹⁹ or a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, ²⁰ or a hunchback or a dwarf, or *one who has* a defect in his eye or eczema or scabs or crushed testicles. ²¹ No man among the descendants of Aaron the priest who has a defect is to come near to offer the Lord’s offerings by fire; *since* he has a defect, he shall not come near to offer the food of his God. ²² He may eat the food of his God, *both* of the most holy and of the holy, ²³ only he shall not go in to the veil or come near the altar because he has a defect, so that he will not profane my sanctuaries. For I am the Lord who sanctifies them.’” ²⁴ So Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel.

No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the food of his God

This included the following:

a blind man, a lame man, a disfigured *face*, any deformed *limb*, a broken foot or broken hand, a hunchback, a dwarf, a defect in his eye, eczema, scabs or crushed testicles.

The emphasis throughout Leviticus is upon perfection.

No man among the descendants of Aaron the priest who has a defect is to come near to offer the Lord’s offerings by fire; *since* he has a defect, he shall not come near to offer the food of his God

He shall not come near the altar or the veil

His role as a priest was limited but not eliminated

He may eat the food of his God, *both* of the most holy and of the holy

Such a son was provided a living