

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.

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....

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

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.

⁴ He shall not defile himself as a relative by marriage among his people, and so profane himself.

No in-laws were included as close relatives.

When the people of Israel take over Canaan the priests will be working at the tabernacle on a rotational basis. If they touched a dead person they would be unclean for 7 days.

See Numbers 19:11-13

¹¹ **The one who touches the dead body of any person will also be unclean for seven days.** ¹² **That one shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day, *and then* he will be clean; but if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean.** ¹³ **Anyone who touches a dead body, the body of a person who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from Israel. Since the water for impurity was not sprinkled on him, he will be unclean; his uncleanness is still on him.**

If we add the time to and from the place of the funeral it could be another week. This was a practical law so the work at the Tabernacle was not interrupted to often.

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.**

All of these things were forbidden to any Israelite.

See Leviticus 19:28

²⁷ **You shall not round off the hairline of your heads, nor trim the edges of your beard.** ²⁸ **You shall not make any cuts in your body for the dead, nor make any tattoo marks on yourselves: I am the Lord.**

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.**

Animal sacrifices were called the food of God but it was understood that this language was metaphorical. Just as when Christ said that Christians should eat his flesh and drink his blood.

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.**

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 and they were to live in such a manner that they were seen as a good example to all of Israel.

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.

This should be an admonishment to all Christians who are considered priests in the eyes of God.

See 1 Peter 2:9 -10

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

⁹ 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. Fire was used to purify that which was impure.

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.'

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,

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; 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.

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

The following things were not allowed

1. To uncover his head or tear his clothes.

Any touching of a dead body, or mourning for a loved one, was denied to the high priest and uncovering the head and /or tearing of the clothes was a sign of mourning.

See Leviticus 10:6

⁶ Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, “Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, so that you do not die and He does not become wrathful against all the congregation. But your kinsmen, the entire house of Israel, shall weep for the burning which the Lord has brought about.

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

See Matthew 26:63 - 66

⁶³ And the high priest said to Him, “I place You under oath by the living God, to tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.” ⁶⁴ Jesus *said to him, “You have said *it* yourself. But I tell you, from now *on* you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” ⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? See, you have now heard the blasphemy; ⁶⁶ what do you think?” They answered, “He deserves death!”

However, Caiaphas was not wrong about tearing his robes because he was not doing it as a sign of mourning for a dead relative.

2. To go out of the sanctuary or profane the sanctuary

The High Priest did not live in the sanctuary. What is meant here is that he could not interrupt his duties even if his parents died.

3. To marry a widow, divorced women, or a harlot.

The High Priest had to marry a Levite and a virgin. 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.

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.

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.

²² He may eat the food of his God, *both* of the most holy and of the holy

His role as a priest was limited because he could not “offer the Lord’s offerings by fire” but that did not affect his income for the following reasons:

1. When he worked at the temple he was still provided for because he could eat the most holy and of the holy offerings even though he could not personally make an offering for the people at the altar.

2. All of the Levites had their own land and cities from which they made a living because they only worked at the temple for 5 weeks during the year.

See pic 2105

Work schedule at the Tabernacle and Temple

In the time of David there were 32,000 Levites

The priests and the Levites were divided into 24 groups

Each of the 24 groups served twice a year

The length of service for each group was 7 days

The week of service began and ended on the Sabbath

In addition, all the groups served for 3 extra weeks during the year

So each group served for a total of 5 weeks during the year

Most of this information can be found in 1 Chron. 23 thru 26

So if we divide 32000 Levites by 24 groups

There were over 1300 Levites serving in the temple each week

And 32,000 during the three festivals

We don't have this kind of detail for the time of the Judges

But lets say it was somewhat similar for the Tabernacle

In Numbers 3 there were 22,000 Levites

That would be over 900 Levites on duty per week

And 22,000 during the three feasts