

Haftarat Emor אָמֹר

Torah: Leviticus 21:1–24:23

Haftarah: Ezekiel 44:15–31

The Function of the Kohanim (Priests) in the Millenium

General Overview

Our Haftarah portion for this week drops us right into the section of Ezekiel where the prophet gives a vision of the future Temple. These particular verses, 44:15–31, discuss the nature of the priesthood that will serve in the Temple. Specifically, we are told that not all of the sons of Levi were permitted to serve in the inner sanctuary and to offer the sacrifices. Rather, the Holy One appointed the descendants of Zadok to fulfil those functions. The bulk of the passage describes their dress, their personal habits, and their other responsibilities in the future Temple.

Connection to the Parasha

This haftarah corresponds to *Parashat Emor*, Leviticus 21:1–24:23. In this parasha, Moshe gave instructions about some of the details of the priests' personal life. These instructions provide the basis for similar teachings that Ezekiel is giving in our haftarah.

Exposition

This is a relatively short and simple section of Scripture. It is easy to follow and to outline. The commentary will, accordingly, center on the description of the future kohanim, the sons of Zadok, who will serve in the future Messianic Temple described by Ezekiel. Here is our outline:

- I. The Identity of the Future Priests
- II. The Responsibilities of the Future Priests
 - A. Professional
 - B. Personal
- III. The Provision for the Future Priests

In this excerpt from Haftarat Emor, we will look at part II, section A, the Professional Responsibilities of the Future Priests.

II. The Responsibilities of The Future Priests

Having established which of the kohanim would have the highest honours of service in the future Temple, Ezekiel proceeds to delineate some of the specific responsibilities that they would have.

A. Professional Responsibilities

1. To Minister to God

The first and foremost of their professional responsibilities is described in 44:15. What is pictured here is that these future priests will participate in the normal responsibilities one would associate with the office of priesthood, such as offering sacrifices and taking care of the items in the inner sanctuary of the Temple. What is significant, however, is that verse 15 is worded according to how *God* describes their responsibilities. We find the first person singular personal pronoun being consistently used. For example, the Lord says that they were to, “come near to *Me* to minister to *Me*; and they shall stand before *Me* to offer *Me* the fat and the blood (44:15b, italics ours). It is easy to see from this that God says that their ministry is really one that directly serves *Him*.

This has added uniqueness when we consider that the Lord Messiah Himself will be present in the Sanctuary of Ezekiel’s Temple. In times past, the manifested glory cloud, the Shekhinah, signified the special presence of God in the Mishkan and in the First Temple. But in the future, the Messiah will be there in bodily form! The kohanim, therefore, will be His personal servants.

2. Torah Teachers

Another responsibility is mentioned in 44:23. Here we are told that, “they shall teach My people [the difference] between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.”

This task, like the previous one, is also a repetition of what the Torah of Moshe teaches concerning the responsibilities of the kohanim (See Leviticus 10:11; Deuteronomy 24:8; and 33:10). Moreover, like the teaching of Moshe, one of the main areas of teaching responsibility that the kohanim will have will be to instruct the people about holiness. What is amazing about this passage is that the time frame in the passage is the millennial kingdom. Nevertheless, God continues to provide instruction for the people from the kohanim.

This has several implications. First, it tells us that there will be many things to learn about God and His Word even during the Millennium. Apparently, even then, people will need instruction about what is holy and what is not holy. Moreover, we can also glean that there will be both holy and profane things during the Millennium. Finally, it implies that even though the Messiah will be present among His people, He will, nevertheless, delegate teaching responsibilities to qualified people. The Millennium will not be a time when the saints of God will sit around idle just having worship services all day (as if that would be so bad!). On the contrary, it will be a time when there will be plenty of opportunity to serve the Holy One and to learn His ways so that we will not walk in the way of unrighteousness.

3. Judges

The third professional responsibility listed in this passage is that the kohanim will also act as judges, particularly settling disputes between people. We find this in

44:24 where we read, “and in a dispute they shall take their stand to judge; they shall judge it according to My ordinances.”

Again, this judicial function is also a Torah teaching. It is not a new responsibility that the kohanim will have just in the Millennium (See Deuteronomy 17:9). What *is* a surprise, however, is that which has been unexpected all along. It appears that life in the Millennium will be far different than what many people may have realized. As far as this verse is concerned, it appears that there will be a real need for judges because people will have personal disputes that will need to be settled.

Thus, we can see from this haftarah that the priests will offer sacrifices, instruct the people, and serve as judges over them as the needs arise.