Refreshed IN THE WORD
For thy word hath quickened me
PSALM 119:50

Torah Studies

Connecting the Torah and Jesus

STUDY 22

Jesus, Our Holy High Priest

Day 22 · Leviticus 21

Understand the priestly instructions of Leviticus 21 and discover why Jesus is the lasting High Priest who brings us near to God.

For personal reading and study with friends

King James Version · Complete Scripture passages

Read and share online

Read one section at a time. Take turns reading the verses aloud, discuss the questions, and choose one practical response. Every passage referenced in the teaching is included in full.

Let’s begin together

Father, teach us to honor Your holiness and value every person. Help us understand the priests’ calling and trust Jesus, our High Priest. In His name, amen.

Leviticus 21 addresses Aaron’s family, the priests who served at Israel’s sanctuary. Their special duties brought special restrictions. These rules concern that priestly office within Israel’s covenant. They are not a scale for measuring the worth of people today.

Main truth: Jesus is the holy, living High Priest who brings us near to God and calls us to serve Him.

1. A special responsibility in worship

Leviticus 21:1-6

1 And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto the priests the sons of Aaron, and say unto them, There shall none be defiled for the dead among his people:

2 But for his kin, that is near unto him, that is, for his mother, and for his father, and for his son, and for his daughter, and for his brother,

3 And for his sister a virgin, that is nigh unto him, which hath had no husband; for her may he be defiled.

4 But he shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself.

5 They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh.

6 They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy.

Contact with the dead brought ritual uncleanness. Ordinary priests could attend to certain close family members, but they had limits connected with their sanctuary service. The commands about mourning also marked them as belonging to the Lord. These rules did not mean that grief was wrong or that a grieving person had no faith.

Leviticus 21:7-9

7 They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God.

8 Thou shalt sanctify him therefore; for he offereth the bread of thy God: he shall be holy unto thee: for I the LORD, which sanctify you, am holy.

9 And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire.

The priests' marriages and households were also placed under strict rules. Verse 9 includes a severe penalty in ancient Israel's law. We read it within that setting, without turning it into an instruction for violence today. A priestly role did not make someone's family less worthy of care or give a leader permission to mistreat them.

2. The high priest carried added duties

Leviticus 21:10-15

10 And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes;

11 Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother;

12 Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the LORD.

13 And he shall take a wife in her virginity.

14 A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.

15 Neither shall he profane his seed among his people: for I the LORD do sanctify him.

The high priest was anointed with oil and wore special garments. His restrictions concerning mourning and marriage were stricter than those of the other priests. His life was closely tied to representing the people before God. The chapter emphasizes the seriousness of that office, not the idea that every believer must copy its requirements.

3. A restriction on service was not a loss of belonging

Leviticus 21:16-24

16 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

17 Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God.

18 For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous,

19 Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded,

20 Or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken;

21 No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God.

22 He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy.

23 Only he shall not go in unto the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the LORD do sanctify them.

24 And Moses told it unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel.

These verses restrict altar service for priests with the physical conditions listed. We should not hide that restriction. Notice also verse 22: the priest could still eat the holy food. He still belonged to the priestly family. The passage does not say that disability is a personal sin or that a person with a disability is worth less.

We must distinguish a rule about Israel's ancient sanctuary from a judgment about someone's value. People with disabilities belong in the life and care of our communities. Listening to them and removing barriers to participation are practical ways to show respect.

4. Jesus lives to intercede for us

Hebrews 7:23-28

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Israel’s priests died and were replaced. Jesus lives forever, so His priesthood continues. “Intercede” means to act on another person’s behalf before God. Hebrews describes Jesus as holy and without sin. He offered Himself once and is able to save completely those who come to God through Him.

The connection centers on His character, lasting life, and complete offering. We are not told to inspect His physical appearance. Our confidence rests in who He is and what He has done. You can bring your need to God through this faithful Savior.

1 Peter 2:4-5

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Peter describes believers as living stones being built into a spiritual house. Their offerings are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Serving God now reaches ordinary acts of trust, prayer, praise, and care for others. We serve because Jesus brings us near.

Talk it over with friends

1. What responsibilities made the priestly office serious?

2. What does verse 22 show about belonging?

3. Why can we trust Jesus as our High Priest?

Put it into practice

Bring one concern to God through Jesus. Then make one act of service more welcoming: ask about someone's needs, make room for participation, or offer patient help.

A verse to carry with you

Hebrews 7:25

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Jesus lives, and His care for those who come through Him continues.

Let’s pray together

Father, thank You for Jesus, our faithful High Priest. Help us draw near with trust, serve with humility, and honor every person. Keep us from confusing outward appearance with spiritual worth. Let our community reflect Your care. In Jesus’ name, amen.

I love you, my friends.

Scripture and sources

Scripture text was checked against the King James Version published by eBible.org. The complete verses are reproduced with their historical wording. Verse numbers and layout are adapted for reading; editorial footnotes are omitted. Tap any Scripture reference to view its source.

Bible edition and text