

Emor 2021

Source Sheet by Dahlia Bernstein

Leviticus 21:1

The LORD said to Moses: Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: None shall defile himself for any [dead] person among his kin,

וַיִּקְרָא כִּי־אֵלֵּי

וַיֹּאמֶר יי אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמֵן
אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ
אֲלֵהֶם לִגְפֹשׁ לֹא־יִטְמָא בְּעַמִּיוֹ:

Leviticus 21:2-4

except for the relatives that are closest to him: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother; also for a virgin sister, close to him because she has not married, for her he may defile himself. But he shall not defile himself as a kinsman by marriage, and so profane himself.

וַיִּקְרָא כִּי־אֵלֵּי־ד'

כִּי אִם־לְשֵׁאוֹרוֹ הַקָּרֵב אֵלָיו לְאִמּוֹ
וּלְאָבִיו וּלְבָנָו וּלְבִתּוֹ וּלְאָחִיוֹ:
וּלְאִחֹתּוֹ הַבְּתוּלָה הַקְּרוּבָה אֵלָיו
אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הָיְתָה לְאִישׁ לָהּ יִטְמָא: לֹא
יִטְמָא בְּעַל בְּעַמִּיו לְהַחֲלוֹ:

Rashi on Leviticus 21:1

SAY UNTO THE PRIESTS [... AND THOU SHALT SAY UNTO THEM] — "Say" and again "thou shalt say unto them" — this repetition is intended to admonish the adults about their children also — that they should teach them to avoid defilement (Yevamot 114a).

רש"י על ויקרא כ"א:א:א'

אמר אל הכהנים. אמר ואמרת,
לְהַזְהִיר גְּדוּלִים עַל הַקְּטָנִים (יבמות
קי"ד):

Rashi on Leviticus 21:1:2

THE SONS OF AARON — בני אהרן
 One might think that חללים (priests who have lost their priestly status for reasons connected with their birth or marriage) also may not defile themselves by the dead, Scripture therefore states, "Say unto the priests", — thus only those sons of Aaron are included who have not lost their priestly character; consequently חללים are excluded (Sifra, Emor, Section 1 1) .

רש"י על ויקרא כ"א:א:ב'
 בני אהרן. יכול חללים ת"ל
 הכהנים:

Rashi on Leviticus 21:1:3

THE SONS OF AARON — בני אהרן
 This implies also those of Aaron's sons who have a bodily blemish;

רש"י על ויקרא כ"א:א:ג'
 בני אהרן. אף בעלי מומין במשמע:

Rashi on Leviticus 21:1:4

THE SONS OF AARON — בני אהרן
 but not the daughters of Aaron (Sifra, Emor, Section 1 1).

רש"י על ויקרא כ"א:א:ד'
 בני אהרן. ולא בנות אהרן (ספרא):

Rashi on Leviticus 21:1:5

THERE SHALL NONE BE DEFILED BY THE DEAD AMONG HIS PEOPLES — This means, as long as the dead is among

רש"י על ויקרא כ"א:א:ה'
 לא יטמא בעמיו. בעוד שהמת
 בתוך עמיו, יצא מת מצוה (שם):

his peoples (i. e. so long as there are some of his people — Jews — who can occupy themselves with his burial) thus excluding the case of a *מת מצויה* (a corpse of a person whose relatives are unknown or which lies in a place where there are no Jews, nor are there any in the near vicinity; cf. Nazir 43b) in which case the priest is allowed to make himself unclean by handling the corpse (Sifra, Emor, Section 1 3).

Rashi on Leviticus 21:2:1

כי אם לשארו BUT FOR HIS KIN [THAT IS NEAR TO HIM] — שאר here denotes his wife (Sifra, Emor, Section 1 4; Yevamot 22b).

Ibn Ezra on Leviticus 21:2:1

EXCEPT FOR HIS KIN. It had appeared to us that the meaning of *she'ero* (His kin) is similar to *she'er* (near of kin) in *None of you...to any that is near of kin to him* (Lev. 18:6). In other words, *she'ero* is a general term,¹⁰ *Meaning a close relative. with the details for his mother, and for his father* following.

Ibn Ezra on Leviticus 21:2:2

רש"י על ויקרא כ"א:ב' א'

כי אם לשארו. אין שארו אלא אשתו (שם; יבמות כ"ב):

אבן עזרא על ויקרא כ"א:ב' א'

כי אם לשארו הקרוב אליו. היה נראה לנו כי פירושו כמו איש איש אל כל שאר בשרו שם כלל ואחר כן פרט לאמו ולאביו:

אבן עזרא על ויקרא כ"א:ב' ב'

The meaning of *ba'al be-amav* (a chief man among his people) (v. 4) is that a husband¹¹ *Who is a kohen*. shall not defile himself for his wife. However, since we saw that our teachers transmitted to us the law that a *kohen* is permitted to defile himself for his wife,¹² *Yevamot 22b*. the first interpretation falls away. They employed the word *she'er* as a support,¹³ *She'ero (his kin) literally means his flesh. According to the rabbis the reference is to a wife. The sages render ki im le-she'ero (except for his kin), except for his wife. According to I.E. the plain meaning of she'ero is not his wife. He believes that the rabbis used this verse as a support for a law which they knew by tradition.* as I explained in my comments on the phrase *unto a foreign people* (Ex. 21:8).¹⁴ *According to the rabbis unto a foreign people means to any stranger. According to I.E. this is not the literal meaning of this phrase. The rabbis merely used this verse as a support. See I.E. on Ex. 21:8 (Vol. 2, pp. 458,459).* The rabbis said that the meaning of *ba'al* is, a chief who rules over the people, as in *the owner thereof* (*be-alav*) *not being with it* (Ex. 22:13).¹⁵ *According to the rabbis the meaning of lo yittamma ba'al be-amav (He shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people) is: "Seeing that he is fit to become the highest and most honored one among his people [i.e., a*

וטעם בעל בעמיו. שלא יטמא
הבעל באשתו וכאשר ראינו
שהעתיקו רבותינו כי יטמא לאשתו
ושמו לשאר כדרך אסמכתא כאשר
פירשתי במלת לעם נכרי ואמרו כי
פירוש בעל גדול שהעם ברשותו
כמו בעליו אין עמו בטל הפירוש
הראשון. וטעם להזכיר אמו קודם
האב כי הזכר חי יותר מהנקבה
ברוב:

high priest], it (Scripture) warns him not to profane his distinction with the impurity of the dead” (Nachmanides, Chavel translation). The reason Scripture mentions the mother of the *kohen* before the father is that in most cases the male lives longer than the female.¹⁶ *In most cases the kohen will mourn for his mother before he does so for his father. Hence she is mentioned first.*

Nazir 43b:6

The Gemara answers: **No**, this presents no difficulty, as **that baraita is** in accordance with the opinion of **Rabbi Yehuda. As it is taught** in a *baraita* that **Rabbi Yehuda says:** “For her he becomes impure” (Leviticus 21:3), this indicates that **to bury her he becomes impure but he does not become impure to bury her limbs, as he does not become impure to bury a limb severed from one of his living relatives, including that of his father. However, he does become impure to bury a limb from his dead father.** Rav Hisda disagrees with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda and rules in accordance with the Rabbis, who maintain that a priest may become impure only to bury his relative’s whole body.

נזיר מ"ג ב:ו'

לֹא הָיָא רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הִיא דְּתַנָּיָא
 רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר לָהּ מִיִּטְמָא וְאִינוּ
 מִיִּטְמָא לְאַבְרָיָהּ שְׂאִינוּ מִיִּטְמָא עַל
 אָבֵר מִן הַחַי שֶׁל אָבִיו אָבֵל מִיִּטְמָא
 הוּא לְאָבֵר מִן הַמֵּת שֶׁל אָבִיו

Sotah 3a:13

§ The Gemara discusses **the matter itself**. “**And he warned his wife,**” i.e., the warning, is **optional**; this is **the statement of Rabbi Yishmael**. **And Rabbi Akiva says:** It is **mandatory**. The Gemara notes that Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva engage in a similar dispute with regard to several other verses. Although under normal circumstances it is prohibited for a priest to become ritually impure through contact with a corpse, the verse states that he may do so for the sake of burying his relatives. The *baraita* teaches: “**For her may he become impure**” (Leviticus 21:3), i.e., for a priest to participate in the burial of his sister, despite the fact that he will contract ritual impurity, is **optional**; this is **the statement of Rabbi Yishmael**. A priest is not obligated to participate, but he may. **And Rabbi Akiva says:** It is **mandatory** for him to do so.

Tractate Semachot 4:8

Of all those regarding whom they said that a *kohen* defiles himself, the defilement is not voluntary but

סוטה ג' א:י"ג

גופא וקנא את אשתו רשות דברי רבי ישמעאל ורבי עקיבא אומר חובה (ויקרא כא, ג) לה יטמא רשות דברי רבי ישמעאל ור"ע אומר חובה

מסכת שמחות ד':ח'

על כל אלה שאמרו כהן מטמא אינו רשות אלא חובה רבי שמעון אומר רשות רבי יהושע אומר חובה:

obligatory. R. Simeon said: It is voluntary. R. Joshua said: It is obligatory.¹⁶ *The phrase for her he defiles [E.V. may he defile] himself (Lev. 21, 3) is to be understood as an obligation; cf. Zeb. 100a (Sonc. ed., p. 480).*

Sifra, Emor, Section 1 12

12) "who is near": to include one who was betrothed. "to him": to include a bogereth (one beyond the age of twelve and a half,) "for her shall he make himself tamei": It is a mitzvah to do so. If he demurred, we force him to do so. And it happened with Yosef the Cohen, whose wife died on the eve of Pesach, and who did not wish to make himself tamei for her, that the sages pushed him and made him do so perforce.

Sifra, Emor, Section 1 13

13) "for him shall he make himself tamei": for (one who is his sister of) a certainty; and he does not make himself tamei for one who is not his sister or a certainty. "for her shall he make himself tamei": and not for others with her, i.e., he should not say: Since I have already made myself tamei (for her), I shall collect the

ספרא, אמור, פרשה א י"ב

[יב] "הקרובה" -- לרבות את הארוסה. "אליו" -- לרבות את הבוגרת. "לה יטמא" -- מצוה. לא רצה לטמא מטמין אותו בעל כרחו. ומעשה ביוסף הכהן שמתה אשתו בערב פסח ולא רצה לטמא לה, ודחפוהו חכמים וטימאוהו בעל כרחו.

ספרא, אמור, פרשה א י"ג

[יג] "לה יטמא" -- מטמא הוא על הודאי ואינו מטמא על הספק. "לה יטמא" -- אינו מטמא לאחרים עמה, שלא יאמר "הואיל ונטמאתי, אלקט עצמות פלוני בידי". "לה יטמא" -- אינו מטמא על איבריה, שאין אדם מטמא על אבר מן החי מאביו. אבל

bones of so and so. "for him shall he make himself tamei": but not for her (discrete) limbs, which she lost when she was alive, his being forbidden to do so (even) for the limbs of his father; but he does make himself tamei for a bone the size of a barley-corn of his father.

מטמא הוא על עצם כשעורה
מאביו. ר' יוסי אומר אין אדם
מטמא על עצם כשעורה מאביו.

Sifra, Emor, Section 114

14) It once happened with Yosef b. Pachsas (a Cohein) that his foot ulcerated and the surgeon wished to amputate it, at which (Yosef) said: "When it is hanging by a thread, let me know." When it reached that point, the surgeon told him and he (Yosef) called to Nechunya his son: "Chunia, my son, until now you were obligated to attend upon me. But now, leave, for the son (of a Cohein) does not make himself tamei for a limb (amputated) from a live father." And when the sages heard about this, they said (on Koheleth 7:15): "The tzaddik has lost, but his righteousness remains with him."

ספרא, אמור, פרשה א י"ד

[יד] מעשה ביוסף פן פכסס שעלת
נומי על רגלו ובקש הרופא
לחותכה. אמר לו כשתניח בה
כחוט השערה הודיעני. חתכה
והניח בה כחוט השערה והודיעו.
קרא לנחוניא בנו. אמר לו "חוניא
בני, עד כאן היית חייב ליטפל בי.
מיכן ואילך צא לך, שאין מטמא על
אבר מן החי מאביו." וכשבא דבר
לפני חכמים אמרו, על זה נאמר
"יש צדיק אובד בצדקו" -- הצדיק
אבד וצדקו עמו.

Rashi on Leviticus 21:4:1

לא יטמא בעל בעמיו להחלו This means:
he shall not defile himself for his wife
if she is really unfitted to be his wife

רש"י על ויקרא כ"א:ד:א'

לא יטמא בעל בעמיו להחלו. לא
יטמא לאשתו פסולה שהיא מקלה
בה בעודה עמו, וכן פשוטו של

(because he is a כהן) and through whom he consequently becomes profaned as a priest, so long as she remains with him (Sifra, Emor, Section 1 15). The following, therefore, is the literal exposition of the verse: לא יטמא בעל, a husband shall not defile himself for his wife's corpse while it is among its people, which means that there are persons who can bury her so that she is not a מת מצוה (cf. Rashi's explanation of בעמיו on v. 1). And with reference to what kind of wife do I say this? With reference to such a one who להחלו, i. e. who leads to his being profaned and therefore disqualified from his priestly duties so long as she remains with him (cf. Sifra, Emor, Section 1 15; Yevamot 90b).

Sforno on Leviticus 21:4:1

לא יטמא בעל בעמיו להחלו, the reason why a priest is not to defile himself through contact with the dead except those of his next of kin, is that also the priest is indeed a בעל בעמיו, a distinguished, highly placed member of his people, it is his task to understand and teach these laws as we know from Maleachi 2,7 "for the lips of the priest are meant to guard knowledge, and Torah and the people will enquire concerning these

מקרא: לא יטמא בעל בשארו בעוד
 שהוא בתוך עמיו — שיש לה
 קוברין, שאינה מת מצוה, ובאיזה
 שאר אמרת? באותו שהוא להחלו
 — להחלו הוא מכהנתו (עי'
 ספרא; יבמות צ')

ספורנו על ויקרא כ"א:ד:א'

לא יטמא בעל בעמיו להחלו
 והטעם שלא יטמא הכהן כי אם
 לקרוביו הוא כי אמנם הכהן הוא
 בעל בעמיו להבין ולהורות כי
 שפתי כהן ישמרו דעת ותורה
 יבקשו מפיהו וראוי לאיש כזה
 לנהוג נשיאות כי היכי דלשתמען
 מיליה ואין ראוי שיחלל הכנתו אל
 מקדש וקדשיו כדי לכבד המתים
 הבלתי קרובים כאמרם ז"ל

from his mouth.” This makes him a person to be treated in the manner one treats a politically highly placed person, a king. Seeing he is supposed to be ever ready to serve the King of Kings, in His Temple, it is not appropriate for such a person to desecrate his status even temporarily in order to participate in the burial rites of ordinary people. According to our sages in Sanhedrin 47 the prime purpose of burying and eulogising the dead is to render honour to them. This conflicts with the honour the priests have to accord to G'd on an ongoing basis. However, the Torah exempts the priests from this restriction for burial and eulogising of near relatives from this rule. [some of the last line is my own wording, though it corresponds to the thoughts expressed by the author. Ed.]

(סנהדרין פכ"ג) שהקבורה וההספד
למת הם יקרא דשכבי. אמנם
לקרובים התיר להטמא כי כבודם
הוא כבודו: