

Parshat Emor

The parsha begins with the word emor, speak. It is interesting why this is the first important word in the parsha. The answer may come from the grammar. Usually, when God command Moses to talk to the people or the priests it goes something like this..."God said to Moses: Speak (Daber) to ... But at the beginning of this parsha the statement is made: "God said to Moses, Speak (Emor) to the priests." Both daber and emor mean speak but the grammatical difference is that Daber may also mean instruct or tell or command. Emor is a nicer way to speak directly to someone. The commands given in Emor are directed to the Priests, Aaron and his sons.

The laws in Emor state that priests may not come in contact with the dead, even the body of his own spouse. This is a way that the priest of Israel could be different from those priests of Egypt. The Egyptian priests prepared the dead for burial and had a lot to do with the dead.

The code continues by saying that a priest may marry but not a divorced woman or women who have bad reputations. The High Priest cannot marry a widow.

Emor also includes a priestly calendar. There are many different calendars in the Bible. We have calendars that tell holiday times, and agricultural times. Some based on the moon and some based on the sun.

Emor describes the holidays of Sukkot, and Shavuot, and Yom Kippur.

Emor also describes the eighth day of Sukkot called Shemini Atzeret.