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Holiness for the Priests
21:1 to 22:33

All **Isra'el** was called to live by the mitzvot of **holiness**, but **the priesthood**, *the cohenim*, were called to an even higher standard of **holiness** than the average **Israelite**. In order to serve at **the bronze altar** for the sacrifices of the people, or in **the Holy Place** as mediators between **YHVH** and mankind, **the priesthood**, **themselves**, were required to live at a higher standard of **holiness**. **They are the ones who present ADONAI with offerings made by fire, the bread of their God; therefore, they must be holy (Leviticus 21:6).**[371]

This parashah (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy**, **to see link click Af – Parashah**) follows a section on **holiness** which began in **Leviticus 17** (see **Cy – The Holiness Code**), where three levels of sanctification can be seen. First, the broad base of **the nation** (see **Cz – Holiness for the People**), then the level of **Levites**, who assisted **the priests** (see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah An – Priests, Levites and Temple Servants**), and finally to the highest level, **the priests** (*the kohanim*), with **the high priest himself** who was the very summit of human **holiness** in **Chapters 21** and **22**.



The basic concept in these chapters is a basic review of the need for **the priests** to be **ritually clean** (see **Bk – Ritually Clean and Unclean Animals**) in order to perform **their** duties. But the teaching found here is more specific than what has previously been taught. For example, we are now informed that even if there is a

small physical **blemish** such as **a hunched back**, or **a broken arm (21:16-21)**, **the man** was disqualified from becoming **the high priest**. Thus, because these **two chapters** stress the need for **the kohanim** to be different from the rest of **the Israelites**, we find that most of the teaching is designed to give specific examples which would serve to remind **the priests** to be **ritually clean**. These examples cover every area of life; from what kind of woman to marry to skin blotches.[372]