

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS 21

This chapter respects the priests, the sons of Aaron, and forbids their mourning for the dead, unless in some cases, (^{<R210>}Leviticus 21:1-6); or their marriage with an whore or a divorced woman, (^{<R210>}Leviticus 21:7,8); and the daughters of any of them to commit fornication, which is made punishable with death, (^{<R210>}Leviticus 21:9); and it contains particular laws for the high priest to observe, who was not to mourn for any, even for his parents, (^{<R210>}Leviticus 21:10,11); nor to go out of the sanctuary, (^{<R212>}Leviticus 21:12); nor to marry any woman but a virgin, (^{<R213>}Leviticus 21:13-15); and it also directs, that none of the priests having any blemish in them should be employed in divine service, though they might eat of the holy things, (^{<R216>}Leviticus 21:16-24).

Ver. 1. *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] According to some Jewish writers this was said on the day the tabernacle was set up; no doubt it was delivered at the same time the above laws were given; and as care was taken for the purity and holiness of the Israelites in general, it was necessary that the priests that were concerned in a more especial manner in the service and worship of God should be holy also, and have some instructions given them to take care and keep themselves from all defilements; and particularly the Jewish writers observe, that this paragraph or section concerning the priests follows upon, and is in connection with the law concerning such as have familiar spirits, and wizards, to teach men, that in matters of doubt and difficulty they should not have recourse to such persons, but to the priests of the Lord:

speak unto the priests, the sons of Aaron; the priests, whether elder or younger, whether fit for service, and whether having blemishes, or not; for there are some things which concern them, and these are sons, male children of Aaron, as the Targum of Jonathan, and not daughters, as Jarchi and others observe; for they were not obliged to regard the laws and rules here given:

and say unto them, there shall none be defiled for the dead among his people; by entering into a tent or house where a dead body lay, by touching it, or by hearing it, or attending it to the grave, or by any expressions of mourning for it, (see ⁴⁰¹⁹¹Numbers 19:11,14,16); that is, for any person in common that were of his people, that were not nearly related to him, as in the cases after excepted; so it was a custom with the Romans, as we are told ^{f731}, that such as were polluted by funerals might not sacrifice, which shows that priests were not allowed to attend funerals, which perhaps might be taken from hence; and so Porphyry says ^{f732}, that sacred persons and inspectors of holy things should abstain from funerals or graves, and from every filthy and mournful sight.

Ver. 2. *But for his kin that is near unto him*, etc.] For such he might be defiled and mourn, or be where they were, and take care of, and attend their funerals: this clause some take to be general, of which the particulars follow, as Aben Ezra; but others take it to be the first particular excepted, and instanced in, and intends his wife; for it may be rendered, as by some, “for his flesh”, or “the rest of him” ^{f733}, the other part of himself, his wife, which is his other self, and one flesh with him; and so Jarchi and others observe, there is no flesh of his, but his wife; and if she is not intended here, she is not expressed elsewhere, though must be supposed, because it is allowed the priest to defile himself for other relations not so near; and it is plain from the case of Ezekiel, that a priest might mourn for his wife, (⁴³⁴⁵Ezekiel 24:15-18); he being forbid it, shows his case to be an extraordinary one, and that ordinarily it was admitted, otherwise there would have been no need of a particular prohibition of him:

[that is], for his mother, and for his father, and for his son, and for his daughter, and his brother; R. Alphe adds ^{f734}, “and his wife”; these being all near relations, and for whom natural affection would lead and oblige him to mourn, and show a concern for their death, and to take care of their funeral. This is to be understood of common priests; for as for the high priest, he might not mourn, or be concerned for either of these.

Ver. 3. *And for his sister a virgin, that is nigh unto him*, etc.] That is, his sister by both father’s and mother’s side, as Aben Ezra; though, according to Gersom, his sister by his father’s side, and not by his mother’s side, is meant; but, according to Alphe, by his mother’s side: perhaps this may signify not nearness of kin, which is expressed by being his sister, but

nearness of place, for, being unmarried, she remained unto her death in her father's house:

which hath had no husband; neither betrothed to one, for then she would have been nigh to her husband, and not her brother, and therefore he might not pollute himself for her, as Gersom observes; nor married to him, for such an one he might not defile himself, even though she might have been rejected or divorced by her husband, as the same writer says:

for her may he be defiled; for a pure virgin that had never been betrothed nor married to a man, and had never departed from her father's house, and so had no husband to mourn for her, and take care of her funeral, and so for all the rest before mentioned; and which Jarchi says is a command, and not a bare sufferance or allowance, but what he ought and was obliged to do; and so it is related of Joseph ^{f735}, a priest, that his wife died in the evening of the sabbath, and he would not defile himself for her, and his brethren the priests obliged him, and made him defile himself against his will.

Ver. 4. [*But he shall not defile himself, [being] a chief man among his people*, etc.] Which is not to be understood of any lord or nobleman or any chief ruler or governor of the people; for the context speaks only of priests, and not of other personages; besides, such might defile themselves, or mourn for their dead, as Abraham did for Sarah; nor of any husband for his wife, for even a priest, as has been observed, might do this for his wife, and much more a private person; nor is there any need to restrain it, as some Jewish writers do, to an adulterous wife, which a husband might not mourn for, though he might for his right and lawful wife; but there is nothing in the text, neither of an husband, nor a wife: the words are to be interpreted of a priest, and either of him as considered as a person of eminence, consequence, and importance, and sons giving a reason why he should not defile himself for the dead, because he was a principal person among his people to officiate for them in sacred things; wherefore if he did not take care that he was not defiled for the dead, which might often happen, he would be frequently hindered from doing his office for the people, which would be attended with ill consequence to them; and therefore the above cases are only excepted, as being such that rarely happened: or rather the words are to be considered as a prohibition of defiling himself "for [any] chief" ^{f736}, or principal man, lord, ruler, or governor, among his people; even for such an one he was not to defile himself, being no relation of his:

to profane himself; make himself unfit for sacred service, or make himself a common person; put himself upon a level with a common private man, and be no more capable of serving at the altar, or doing any part of the work off priest, than such an one.

Ver. 5. *They shall not make baldness upon their head*, etc.] For the dead, as Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Ben Gersom; not shave their heads, or round the corners of them, or make baldness between their eyes on that account; as those things were forbid the Israelites, so the priests also; this and what follow being superstitious customs used among the Heathens in their mournings for the dead, particularly by the Chaldeans, as Aben Ezra observes; and so by the Grecians; when Hephestion, one of Alexander's captains, died, he shaved his soldiers and himself, imitating Achilles in Homer^{f737}; so the Egyptians, mourning for the loss of Osiris, annually shaved their heads^{f738}; and the priests of Isis, mourning for her lost son, are called by Minutius Felix^{f739} her bald priests; (see ~~<RBZ>~~ Leviticus 19:27,28 ~~<B4D>~~ Deuteronomy 14:1);

neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard: the five corners of it; (see Gill on "~~<RBZ>~~ Leviticus 19:27"). This the Israelites in common might not do, and particularly their priests; though the Egyptian priests shaved both their heads and beards, as Herodotus^{f740} relates: and so they are represented in the Table of Isis^{f741}:

nor make any cuttings in their flesh; either with their nails, tearing their cheeks and breasts, or with an instrument cutting their flesh in any part of their bodies, as was the custom of Heathen nations; such were made by the Egyptians in their mournings^{f742}; (see Gill on "~~<RBZ>~~ Leviticus 19:28").

Ver. 6. *They shall be holy unto their God*, etc.] Sacred to his service, and wholly given up to it, and not interest themselves in things which hindered from it, or made them unfit for it; and such care becomes the ministers of the word, who should give up themselves to it, and not entangle themselves with other affairs; they should be clean, pure, and holy, that bear the vessels of the Lord, and minister in holy things, and should set an example of purity and holiness to others:

and not profane the name of their God; or cause it to be profaned and evil spoken of on their account, or his service to be interrupted, and they who bore his name put upon a level with common persons through their pollutions:

for the offerings of the Lord made by fire; the burnt offerings, which were offered up to the Lord on the altar of burnt offering every day, besides others on divers occasions:

[and] the bread of their God do they offer; the shewbread, which they set every week before the Lord on the shewbread table, and the meat or bread offering, the “minchah”, which they continually offered along with the sacrifices: or the word “and”, being a supplement, may be left out; and so this clause is put by way of apposition, and as interpreting the fire offering to be the bread of their God, which being wholly burnt on the altar, and devoted to God, was his meat and food, and accepted by him, (see ^{<BRI>}Leviticus 3:11);

therefore they shall be holy; separate from all others, and abstain from all impurity both of flesh and spirit, from all uncleanness, moral and ceremonial; it being highly fit and proper that the bread of God should be offered by holy persons.

Ver. 7. *They shall not take a wife [that is] a whore, or profane*, etc.] By the former is meant a common whore, that prostitutes herself to any one through lust or for gain; and by the latter one whose chastity is violated, but either unwillingly, that has been forced and ravished, or else willingly, being enticed, persuaded, and prevailed upon, but did not make a practice of it; this seems to be the true sense of the words: but the Jewish writers understand them differently; by a “whore” they suppose is meant one that is not an Israelitish woman, that is not born of an Israelite, at least of an Israelitish woman, as proselytes or freed persons; for they say there are no whores but such, or one that lies with such persons, she may not marry with; as such as are guilty of cutting off, or any of the Nethinim, or spurious persons, so Jarchi; and by a “profane” person they think is meant such as are born of those that are rejected, as the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it; that is, that are either born of incestuous marriages, such as are forbidden, (^{<BRI>}Leviticus 18:1-18); or that are born of those that are rejected in the priesthood, or whom a priest might not marry, as the daughter of a widow, by the high priest, or the daughter of one divorced, by a common priest, which is the sense of Jarchi:

neither shall they take a woman put away by her husband: which was, in these and later times, common for any offence, when the crime of adultery was not pretended; but this always supposed something bad or amiss, and made such a woman suspected of having done an unseemly thing, therefore

priests were forbidden marrying such persons: the Targum of Jonathan adds,

“or by her husband’s brother;”

and so takes in one that has loosed the shoe, as the Jews call her, who being left without issue, her husband’s brother refused to marry her, and therefore she plucked off his shoe, and spit in his face, (see ^{<620>}Deuteronomy 25:7-9); such an one a priest might not marry, according to this paraphrast, and other Jewish writers, and if he did was to be beaten ^{f743},

for he [is] holy unto his God; separated from common persons, and devoted to the service of God, and therefore not to be defiled with such sort of women, or to lie under any scandal or reproach through such, marriages.

Ver. 8. *Thou shalt sanctify him therefore*, etc.] In thought and word, as Aben Ezra, by thinking and speaking well of him; should esteem and reckon him a holy person, being in a sacred office, and honour him as such; and do all that can be done to preserve him from unholiness and impurity, and particularly from marrying with improper and unsuitable persons, such as would bring a scandal on him and his sacred office: this seems to be spoken to Moses, and so to the civil magistrate in succession, who were not to suffer such marriages to take place in the priesthood; and were not only to persuade from it, but to exercise their authority, and oblige them to put away such wives, and if they refused, to use severity; so Jarchi,

““thou shalt sanctify him”, whether he will or not; if he will not put her away, beat him and chastise him until he does put “her away”,”

(see ^{<418>}Ezra 2:62);

for he offereth the bread of the Lord; meaning not the shewbread he set in order before the Lord every week, but the various gift and sacrifices which were offered to God by him, and were acceptable to him as his food; and therefore he ought to be holy that drew nigh to God, and was employed in such service, (see ^{<4206>}Leviticus 21:6);

he shall be holy unto thee; in thy account and estimation, and for thy service to offer holy sacrifices, and therefore should be careful of his holiness to preserve it:

for I the Lord, which sanctify you, [am] holy; in his nature, works, and ways, and who had separated them from all other people to be a holy people to him, and therefore they that ministered in holy things for them should be holy likewise.

Ver. 9. *And the daughter of any priest*, etc.] The Targum of Jonathan restrains it to one that is betrothed; but others, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra, whether betrothed or married; and all confess, as the former says, that the Scripture does not speak of one that is single or entirely free: but there is no exception in the text; and besides, the daughter of any man that was betrothed to a man, and guilty of the crime here spoken of, was to die, (^{<OR23>}Deuteronomy 22:23,24); and therefore such a law respecting the priest's daughter would be needless; unless it can be thought that it was made merely for the sake of the different kind of death she was to be put to, and that burning was a more terrible one than stoning:

if she profane herself by playing the whore; which brings scandal and disgrace on any person, and much more on anyone that had the honour of being related to a person in such a sacred office, and the advantage of a more strictly religious education, and had eaten of the holy things in her father's house; all which were aggravations of her crime, and made it the more scandalous and reproachful to her: some render it, "when she begins to play the whore"^{f744}; as soon as ever it is discovered in her, and she is taken in it; even for the first that she commits, she is not to be spared, but put to death:

she profaneth her father: which is another aggravation of her sin; she brings him under disgrace, disparages his office, and exposes him to censure, reproach, and ridicule, as not having taken care of her education, and taught her better, and kept her under restraints; men will upbraid him with it, saying, this is a priest's daughter that has committed this lewdness; nor will say of him, as Jarchi observes, cursed be he that begat her, and cursed be he that brought her up:

she shall be burnt with fire; not with hot melted lead poured down her mouth, but with faggots set about her; (see Gill on "^{<OR14>}Leviticus 20:14"); no punishment is here fixed for the person that lay with her, but, according to the Jewish canons^{f745}, she was to be strangled.

Ver. 10. *And [he that is] the high priest among his brethren*, etc.] Either among his brethren, the priests, being in office above them; or among his

brethren the Israelites, among and over whom he is high priest; or, as others render it, “the priest who is greater than his brethren”^{f746}, in a higher office; the Jews say^{f747} the high priest was to be greater than his brethren, in beauty, in strength, in wisdom, and in riches; and if he had not money enough, all the priests were to give him of theirs, everyone according to his riches, until he became the richest among them all:

upon whose head the anointing oil was poured; as it was poured upon Aaron at his consecration, and those that succeeded him, (^{<0297>}Exodus 29:7) (^{<0812>}Leviticus 8:12);

and that is consecrated to put on the garments; the eight garments with which the high priest was clothed at the time of his consecration, (^{<0817>}Leviticus 8:7-9); and in which he and his sons are said to be consecrated, (^{<0292>}Exodus 29:29); in order to which he was “to fill his hand”; as the phrase here is, that is, with the fat and right shoulder of the ram of consecration, and with the loaf of bread, and cake of oiled bread, and wafer, (^{<0292>}Exodus 29:23,24); in all which he was a type of Christ, the great High Priest, as he is often called, who is greater than his brethren in all the above things, the high priest exceeded his brethren, except in worldly riches; and yet the earth also is his, and the fulness thereof, well as he is fairer than the children of men, stronger than the strong man armed, and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in him; he is anointed also with the oil of gladness above his fellows; and all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, and is consecrated an high priest for evermore: of the high priest it is said, he

shall not uncover his head: that is, on account of the dead; not take off his mitre, or in any such way express mourning for the dead; or shall not nourish his hair or let it grow, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan; and so Jarchi interprets it, he shall not let the hair grow for mourning; and what is nourishing of the hair? when it is let grow more than thirty days:

nor rend his clothes; that is, on the same account, and therefore Jonathan adds, in the hour of distress, or mourning for the dead; otherwise, in case of blasphemy, he might rend his clothes, (see ^{<0116>}Matthew 26:65); and indeed, according to the Jewish canons, he might rend his clothes in mourning, only in a different manner from common priests; for so they say^{f748},

“he may not rend for the dead, as other priests,”

as it is said: “nor rend his clothes”; and if he rends he is to be beaten, but he may rend below over against (or near) his feet; and so in the Misnah ^{f749}, an high priest rends below, and a common priest above; (see Gill on “~~Exod~~ Leviticus 10:6”).

Ver. 11. *Neither shall he go in to any dead body*, etc.] That is, into a tent or house where any dead body lies, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra interpret it, for whoever went into such a place was unclean seven days; and so long therefore an high priest, should he enter there, would be prevented doing the duty of his office, (see ~~Num~~ Numbers 19:14); this was aped and followed by the Heathens in later times; so among the Romans, the “Flamen Dialis”, or high priest of Jupiter, might not go into a place where a dead body was burnt or buried, nor touch any ^{f750}; and it was a custom with them, as Servius ^{f751} tells us, to put a branch of cypress at the door of a house where a dead body was, that an high priest might not enter through ignorance, and be defiled:

nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; by entering into the tent or house where they lay dead, or by touching them, or attending the funeral of them, or by concerning himself about it; and there was no need to mention his son or his daughter, his brother or his sister; for if he was not to defile himself for any of his parents, much less for any of those which are excepted in the case of a common priest, (~~Lev~~ Leviticus 21:2,3); the Jews do indeed make one exception in the case of an high priest, and that is, that if he meets with a dead body in the way, he was obliged to defile himself for it and bury it ^{f752}; and so among the Romans, though it was a crime for an high priest to look upon a dead body, yet it was reckoned a greater, if, when he saw it, he left it unburied ^{f753}.

Ver. 12. *Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary*, etc.] In the time of service, upon any occasion whatever; otherwise, when there was a necessity for it, he might go out from thence, though this was rarely done, and only in the night time: Maimonides ^{f754} says he had a house prepared for him in the sanctuary, called the chamber of the high priest; and it was his honour and his glory to remain in the sanctuary all the day, and he did not go out, except to his own house, and that only in the night, or an hour or two in the day; and his house was in Jerusalem, and from thence he never removed: but this law respects him only in the case of his dead; as when any news was brought him of the death of his father, or of his mother, if in his service, he was not to quit it on any account; for we are

told ^{f755}, that an high priest might offer when mourning, though he might not eat in such a circumstance, whereas a common priest might neither offer nor eat; nor might an high priest go out of the sanctuary on such an occasion, if he was not in service, as to follow the dead corpse or bier, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra interpret it; at least, he was to go no further than the gate of the city; though even this is not allowed by others, who say ^{f756}, if the dead were his, he might not go out after it; he might not go out of the door of his house, nor out of the sanctuary, and all the people were to come and comfort him at his own house:

nor profane the sanctuary of his God; by deserting the service of it, on any account, and particularly on account of the dead, by departing from it to go after them, and by entering into it again before the time, when so defiled:

for the crown of the anointing oil of his God [is] upon him; the anointing oil, which was a crown of glory, and gave him a superior dignity to others, which it became him to be careful not to debase by any of the above things: or “the crown and the anointing oil”, so some ^{f757} supply the word “and”; both the golden plate or the holy crown, as it is sometimes called, and the anointing oil were upon him, which showed him to be a very dignified person, a sort of king as well as a priest, and so a type of Christ, who is a priest upon his throne, (~~3863~~ Zechariah 6:13);

I [am] the Lord: whose high priest he is, and who command him all these things, and expect to be obeyed in them.

Ver. 13. *And he shall take a wife in her virginity.*] One, and not two, or more, as Ben Gersom observes; and so Maimonides says ^{f758}, an high priest might never take two women together; for it is said, “a wife”, or “woman”, one, and not two; and so it is explained in the Talmud ^{f759}; for though polygamy was practised by the Israelites, and even by the common priests, yet these writers suppose it was by no means allowed to an high priest: among the Egyptians, though they took as many wives as they pleased, their priests, married but one ^{f760}; and so a minister of the New Testament is to be the husband of one wife, (~~5480~~-1 Timothy 3:2); and this wife the high priest was to take was to be a “virgin”, one that not only had never known a man, but that was never betrothed to any; yea, according to the Talmudists ^{f761}, who was not quite ripe for marriage, or the time of her puberty not fully completed, which was the age of twelve years; within, or somewhat before that time, the high priest was to marry her, that it might be out of all doubt that she was a pure virgin; since it is said, “in her

virginity”, within the time of her puberty, before it was quite up; this, by many, is thought to be an emblem of Christ and his church; as he was typified by the high priest, so the church by the virgin he married, which is espoused to Christ as a chaste virgin, (~~47100~~2 Corinthians 11:2).

Ver. 14. *A widow*, etc.] The high priest might not marry, whether the widow of a priest or of an Israelite, as Aben Ezra, that is, of any Israelite that was not of the priesthood; and this, whether a widow after espousals, or after marriage, as runs the Jewish canon ^{f762}; the meaning is, that if she was betrothed to a man, and that man died before he married her, and so was a virgin; yet being betrothed to him was reckoned as his widow; and such an one the high priest might not marry, any more than one that had been left a widow, having being married: though, according to the same constitutions, if he had betrothed a widow, and after that was appointed an high priest, he might marry her, and an instance of it is given in Joshua the son of Gamla: and in the same it is observed, that an high priest, when his brother dies, must suffer his shoe to be plucked off, and not marry his brother’s widow; which, in other cases, when there was no issue, was required:

or a divorced woman; whether by a priest, or a common Israelite; and indeed, if a common priest might not marry such a person, much less an high priest: or profane anyone born of those that were not fit for priests to marry, as the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi; (see Gill on “~~48200~~Leviticus 21:7”);

[*or*] *an harlot*; a common prostitute:

those shall he not take any or either of them, to be his wife; which are forbid in order to maintain the dignity of his office, and a reverence of it: there seems to be a gradation in these instances, he might not marry a widow, which was forbidden no other man; and if not such an one, much less a divorced woman, still less a profane person, and least of all an harlot;

but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife; which phrase, “of his own people”, did not limit him to his own tribe, and to the fraternity of priests in it, as if he was to marry only in it, or the daughter of a priest; for the priests and Levites being scattered in the several tribes, and having no inheritances in them, were not restrained from marrying into other tribes, as the rest of the tribes were; and so an high priest sometimes married into another tribe, though he took care not to debase himself, by marrying into

a mean family: so Jehoiada, the high priest, married Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram, (^{<421>}2 Chronicles 22:11); but by this law he was forbid to marry a virgin of another nation, even though a proselytess and one that was made free, as Gersom observes; a captive virgin, and one that was become a Jewess, as Aben Ezra says, he was not allowed to marry.

Ver. 15. *Neither shall he profane his seed among his people*, etc.] By marrying any such persons, whereby his children, born of them, would lie under disgrace, and be unfit to succeed him in the priesthood, or by marrying among mean persons, or by marrying them to such as were unlawful, and would be a disparagement to them:

for I the Lord do sanctify him; separate him from all others, to the high and sacred office of the high priesthood, and am concerned for his honour and holiness; and therefore it became him to observe these laws and rules, and abstain from such disagreeable marriages.

Ver. 16. *And the Lord spake unto Moses*, etc.] After he had spoken to him of the holiness of the priests, that they should not defile themselves, neither with the dead nor with impure marriages, he proceeded to add some things concerning blemishes in their bodies, which rendered them unfit for the service:

saying; as follows.

Ver. 17. *Speak unto Aaron, saying*, etc.] Who being the high priest, it was incumbent on him, at least at this time, to see that the laws and rules relating to the priesthood were observed; and particularly to examine carefully who were and who were not to be admitted to serve in it:

whosoever [he be] of thy seed in their generations; or, “a man of thy seed” ^{f763}, for this only respected his male seed, females of his seed had no concern in the following laws; but his sons, in all successive ages and generations, to the coming of the Messiah, had, whether high priests or common priests:

that hath [any] blemish; in any part of his body, particularly such as are after mentioned:

let him not approach to offer the bread of his God; neither go into the holy place, to set the shewbread in order there, nor to offer any sacrifice upon the altar; so Josephus ^{f764} explains this law; that a priest should be perfect,

and if he laboured under any defect, should not ascend the altar, nor enter into the temple: this was imitated by the Heathens: Romulus ordered that such as were weak and feeble in any part of the body should not be made priests ^{f765}: the Jewish priests were types of Christ, who is holy, harmless, without spot and blemish; and through whose blood and righteousness all who are made priests by him are unblamable, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; and a Gospel minister, bishop, or pastor, ought to be unblemished in his life and conversation, (^{<3006>}Titus 1:6,7); and there are some who think that the blemishes of the mind and of the life are rather here meant than those of the body.

Ver. 18. *For whatsoever man [he be] that hath a blemish*, etc.] Let him be otherwise ever so well qualified for his office, as with respect to his parentage, against which no objection lies; or, as to his character and abilities, being a man of knowledge and of good manners; and whether these blemishes be, as the Jews ^{f766} call them, fixed, settled ones, which have attended them ever since they were born, and are likely to attend them as long as they live; or are transient ones, only for the present, and perhaps, in a short time, will be removed; yet it matters not, while these blemishes are on them,

he shall not approach; to the altar to offer sacrifice, or do any part of the priestly office, for this phrase is expressive of a sacerdotal act: the particular blemishes unfitting a man for such service follow:

a blind man, or a lame; that is blind of one eye, or of both; and is lame of one leg, or of both:

or he that hath a flat nose; which Jarchi explains, whose nose is sunk between his two eyes, whose nose is short, and crooked, or mutilated:

or anything superfluous; more members than usual, as six fingers on an hand, or two gristles in an ear, as Ben Gersom; or whose members are not proportionate, as one eye large and the other small, or one thigh or leg longer than the other, so Jarchi; the Targum of Jonathan is,

“whose thigh (or thigh bone) is out of joint;”

and so a man draws his foot after him, which is the sense of the Rabbins, as observed by Kimchi ^{f767}, and Ben Melech from him; and so such are not fit to be called the priests of the Lord, and much less ministers of his word, who are blind as to the knowledge of divine and spiritual things, and walk

not as becomes the Gospel of Christ; or halt between two opinions, or savour not the things of God, and lay not aside all superfluity of naughtiness.

Ver. 19. *Or a man that is brokenfooted or brokenhanded.*] That has any of the bones or joints in his hands and feet broke, or when they are distorted, and he is clubfooted, or his fingers crooked and clustered together; and such a man could not be fit to ascend the altar, and lay the sacrifice in order upon it; and may be an emblem of such as are awkward or disorderly in their walk and conservation, and to every good work and action unfit, and so unfit for their master's use.

Ver. 20. *Or crookbackt,* etc.] That has a protuberance, or bunch upon his back, one that we commonly call "hunchbacked"; the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem paraphrase it,

"whose eyebrows lying cover his eyes;"

and so Jarchi, interprets it, the hair of whose eyebrows is long and lying; and so other Jewish writers understand it of some deformity about the eyes, the hair of the eyebrows being thick and heavy over them, and so hinder the sight, at least it makes the person not so sightly and graceful; it is said ^{f768}, he that hath no eyebrows, or but one eyebrow, is the "Gibben" (the word here used) spoken of in the law, (~~(R21D)~~ Leviticus 21:20):

or a dwarf; one of a small stature, as Aben Ezra, as generally hunchbacked persons are, and so unfit to attend the altar, being scarce able to reach up to it, and do the business of it, as well as must make a very mean appearance; but the above Targums understand this also of some blemish about the eyes, paraphrasing it

"or he that has no hair on his eyebrows,"

just the reverse of the former; Jarchi seems to understand it of a thin small film upon the eye; though something of that kind seems to be intended in the next clause:

or that hath a blemish in his eye; a mixture, a confusion, or rather a suffusion in it, as the above Targum; in which, as one of them says, the white is mixed with the black, and with which agrees what is said in the Misnah ^{f769}, where it is asked, what is the confusion or suffusion? the white which spreads in the his, and enters into the black of the eye; it seems to be

a white speck in the pupil of the eye, and so Jarchi, Kimchi^{f770}, and others interpret it:

or be scurvy or scabbed; both these were kinds of ulcers, according to the Jewish writers, particularly Jarchi, who says of the first, that it is a dry scab within and without; and of the other, that it is the Egyptian scab, which is moist without and dry with it; and so the Targum of Jonathan:

or hath his stones broken; this is differently interpreted in the Misnah^{f771}, and by other Jewish writers; some say it signifies one that has no testicles, or only one; so the Septuagint and the Jerusalem Targum: others, whose testicles are broken or bruised, so Jarchi: or are inflated, so Akiba, Aben Ezra, and the Targum of Jonathan; some understand it of an “hernia” or rupture, when a man is burstened: all which may in a moral and mystical sense signify either some defect in the understanding, or vices in the heart or life, which render unfit for public service in the sanctuary.

Ver. 21. *No man that hath a blemish, of the seed of Aaron the priest, etc.*] Whether an high priest or a common priest that lies on him anyone of the above blemishes; and which the Jewish writers^{f772} make to amount to the number of one hundred and forty, and which they reckon, so many in one part of the booty and so many in another, till they make up the said number; and whoever had any might not

come nigh to offer up the sacrifices of the Lord made by fire; the burnt offerings on the altar, to which he might not approach, and the meat offerings, and the fat, and the incense:

he hath a blemish; in one part of him or another; and though but one,

he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God: this is repeated for the confirmation of it, and to show how determined the Lord was in this matter; and how much he should resent it in any that should be found guilty of the breach of those rules, and so it is designed to deter from attempting: it.

Ver. 22. *He shall eat the bread of his God, etc.*] That part of the sacrifices which was appropriated by the Lord to the priests, for the maintenance of them and their families; for though their natural infirmities disqualified them for service, yet they did not become hereby impure, either in a moral nor ceremonial sense, and might eat of the sacrifices, which impure persons might not; and so the tradition is, blemished persons, whether their

blemishes are fixed or transient, may divide and eat, but not offer^{f773}; these being priests, and having no inheritance, nor any way of getting their livelihood, provision is made for them that they might not perish through their defects in nature, which were not voluntary and brought upon them by themselves, but by the providence of God; and such were allowed to eat

[both] of the most holy and of the holy; there were things the priests eat of, which were most holy, as what remained of the meat offerings, and of the sin offerings, and of the trespass offerings, which only the males of the priest's family might eat of, and that only in the holy place; and there were others less holy, the lighter holy things, as the Jews call them, as the wave breast, and heave shoulder, and the tithes and firstfruits, which were eaten of by all in their families, their daughters as well as their sons, and in their own houses; now of each of these might the blemished priests eat; (see ~~NUM~~ Numbers 18:9,10), etc.

Ver. 23. *Only he shall not go in unto the vail*, etc.] So far as to the vail, which divided between the holy and the holy of holies; that is, he shall not go into the holy place which was before the vail; not to set the shewbread upon the table there, nor to light and him the lamps in the candlestick, nor to offer incense on the altar of incense, which stood in it: some render it “within the vail”^{f774}, where only the high priest might enter once a year; but if he had any blemish on him he might not, nor might such an one be an high priest; Aben Ezra seems to have some respect to this in his note,

“to the vail he shall not come, that he may be an high priest:”

nor come nigh unto the altar; as not to the altar of incense in the holy place, so neither to the altar of burnt offering in the court of the tabernacle, that is, so as to officiate there: but though they might not be employed in such sacred service, the Jews in later times have found business for them to employ them in, and that was worming the wood, or searching the wood for worms, which was used in the burning of the sacrifices; for we are told^{f775}, that at the northeast corner (of the court of the women) was the wood room, where the priests that had blemishes wormed the wood; and whatsoever wood in which a worm was found, was rejected from being laid upon the altar: the reason why he might not go into either place before mentioned is repeated,

because he hath a blemish; either fixed or transient; one of those particularly expressed, or any other; for the Jews suppose there are others implied besides those expressed, which disqualified for service:

that he profane not my sanctuaries; if an high priest, the holy of holies, if a common priest, the holy place, and the court of the tabernacle:

for I the Lord do sanctify them; the veil, to which blemished priests might not go: and the altar, to which they might not come nigh: or rather, the sanctuaries or holy places, where they might not officiate, which God had separated and devoted for sacred uses, and were not to be defiled by any; though Ben Gersom observes, that this has no respect to the sanctuary, for if it had it would have been said, “I am the Lord, that sanctify it”; but since a plural word is used before, I see not but that with great propriety it is expressed, and with reference thereunto, “sanctify them”; which he would have understood of holy things, but what he means is not easy to say, unless the holy things such persons might eat of, (⁴⁸²²Leviticus 21:22), which is fetched.

Ver. 24. *And Moses told [it] to Aaron, and to his sons*, etc.] What God had said to him concerning the priests defiling themselves for the dead, both common priests and high priest, and concerning their marriages and their blemishes; that they might be careful not to transgress the laws and rules given them concerning those things:

and to all the children of Israel; to the heads of the tribes and elders of the people, and by them to the whole, that they might know who were fit, and who not, to put their sacrifice into their hands, to offer for them: Jarchi thinks this was to warn the sanhedrim concerning the priests, whose business it was to examine and judge who were fit for service and who not; for so we are told ^{f776}, that in the chamber Gazith, or of hewn stone, the great sanhedrim of Israel sat and judged the priests, and rejected some and received others.