

## **Parashat Emor: the Cohen and the death of a relative – April 27, 2013**

Our Parsha begins with the set of laws which regulates the life of the Cohanim (priests) and the Cohen Gadol (High Priest).

The Cohanim were restricted about to whom they were permitted to get married and with which relatives they could receive impurity in the time of the passing of one of them. It seems that the Cohen was not allowed to fully dedicate himself to the mourning of a family member due to his role as a spiritual model in a life of purity for the People of Israel.

In addition to that topic, Parshat Emor also gives us a description of all the national holidays of the Hebrew calendar. This juxtaposition of the regulations of the Cohen in relation to mourning, and the joy of the Israelites in celebrating the festivals is represented in Jewish law in the situation when someone has to mourn a relative and at the same time a Jewish holiday comes. Which one takes precedence? The tradition is clear: Holidays. The Jewish family is asked to finish its mourning process in order to join the celebration of the national Holiday.

Whit the Cohen and his regulations is in some way similar, especially for the Cohen Gadol: His duties in regard to the service of God representing the People of Israel are considered more important than his personal process of mourning for a relative. His important role demands from them a high standard and a life of devotion to their People.

Shabbat Shalom!