

Expanding Leadership: Shifting Views on Difference and Disability *Parshat Emor*

Leviticus 21:16-24

(16) The LORD spoke further to Moses: (17) Speak to Aaron and say: **No man of your offspring throughout the generations who has a defect shall be qualified to offer the food of his God.** (18) No one at all who has a defect shall be qualified to draw near: no man who is blind, or lame, or has a limb too short or too long; (19) no man who has a broken leg or a broken arm; (20) or who is a hunchback, or a dwarf, or who has a growth in his eye, or who has a boil-scar, or a scab with eruptions, or crushed testes. (21) No man among the offspring of Aaron the priest who has a defect shall be qualified to offer the LORD's offering by fire; having a defect, he shall not be qualified to offer the food of his God. (22) He may eat of the food of his God, of the most holy as well as of the holy; (23) but he shall not enter behind the curtain or come near the altar, for he has a defect...

Rashi on Leviticus 21:21

"He has a blemish": These apparently redundant words imply: so long as he has the bodily blemish he is unfit for priestly service; consequently, if his blemish disappears, he is fit (for priestly service) (*Sifra, Emor, Chapter 3:6*).

ויקרא כ"א:ט"ז-כ"ד
(טז) וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (יז) דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר אִישׁ מִזֶּרְעֶךָ לְדֹרֹתָם אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בוֹ מוֹם לֹא יִקְרַב לְהִקְרִיב לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵינוּ: (יח) כִּי כָל־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בוֹ מוֹם לֹא יִקְרַב אִישׁ עוֹר אוֹ פֶּסֶח אוֹ תָרֶם אוֹ שְׂרוּעַ: (יט) אוֹ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה בוֹ שֶׁבֶר רֶגֶל אוֹ שֶׁבֶר יָד: (כ) אוֹ־גִבֹן אוֹ־זָק אוֹ תִבְלָל בְּעֵינָיו אוֹ גֵרֵב אוֹ יִלְפָת אוֹ מְרוּחַ אֲשָׁד: (כא) כָּל־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בוֹ מוֹם מִזֶּרַע אֲהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן לֹא יֵאָשׁוּ לְהִקְרִיב אֶת־אֲשֵׁי יְיָ מוֹם בּוֹ אֶת לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵינוּ לֹא יֵאָשׁוּ לְהִקְרִיב: (כב) לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִקְדָּשֵׁי הַקֹּדֶשִׁים וּמִן־הַקֹּדֶשִׁים יֹאכֵל: (כג) אַךְ אֶל־הַפְּרֻכָּת לֹא יָבֹא וְאֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא יֵאָשׁוּ כִּי־מוֹם בּוֹ...

רש"י על ויקרא כ"א:כ"א:ב'

מום בו. בעוד מומו בו פסול, האם עבר מומו כפשוטו (ספרא):

Megillah 24b

מתני' כהן שיש בידיו מומין לא ישא את כפיו... תניא נמי הכי זבלגן לא ישא את כפיו ואם היה דש בעירו מותר. תניא נמי הכי סומא באחת מעיניו לא ישא את כפיו ואם היה דש בעירו מותר: ר"י אומר מי שהיו ידיו צבועות לא ישא את כפיו: תנא אם רוב אנשי העיר מלאכתן בכך מותר:

The Mishna teaches: a Priest who has blemishes on his hands should not raise his hands for the priestly blessing...This is also taught in a *baraita*: One whose eyes run should not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Blessing, **but if he is a familiar figure in his town, he is permitted to do so.** This is also taught in a *baraita*: One who is blind in one eye may not lift his hands and recite the Priestly Benediction, **but if he is a familiar figure in his town, he is permitted to do so.** Rabbi Yehuda said: One whose hands are dyed blue should not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Blessing. It was taught in a *baraita*: **If most of the townspeople are engaged in this work as well (dyeing), he is permitted to recite the priestly blessing.**

Committee on Jewish Law & Standards (CJLS) Teshuva - "The status of the *Heresh* and of Sign Language" Pamela Barmasch (2011)

"A deaf person may serve as *shaliach tzibur* in sign language in a minyan whose medium of communication is sign language" (p. 18)

"Sign language may be used for tefilot, such as the *shema* and *shmoneh esreh*, that must be articulated" (p. 18)