

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation (Under same management for over 5781 years) **SHABBAT SERVICE**

April 17th, 10:30 AM Lolo Community "Synagogue"
12:30 PM Oneg Shabbat

"Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless; who live by the Torah of Adonai.
Blessed are those who observe His instruction; who seek Him with all their heart." Psalm 119



Tazria

Leviticus 12:1- 3

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

Vay'daber Adonai el-Moshe lemor.

And the Lord spoke to Moses saying,

דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִשָּׁה כִּי תִזְרֶיעַ וַיִּלְדָּה זָכָר וְטִמְאָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים

Daber el-benei Yisra'el lemor, israh ki tazria

v'yaldah zachar v'tame'ah shiv'at yamim

"Speak to the sons of Israel saying, 'When a woman gives birth and bears a male child,

then she shall be unclean for seven days,

כִּימֵי נִדַת הַדָּוָה תִּטְמָא: וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בֶּשֶׂר עֶרְלָתוֹ:

kimey nidat devotah tit'ma. Uvayom hashmini yimol besar orlato.

as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean.

And on the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."



Metzora Leviticus 14:1-3

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: זֹאת תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת הַמִּצְוָה

Vay'daber Adonai el-Moshe lemor. Zot tih'yeh torat ha-m'tsora
And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, "This shall be the law of the leper

בְּיוֹם טְהוֹרָתוֹ וְהֵבִיא אֵל-הַכֹּהֵן: וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל-מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה

**b'yom tahorato v'hoova el-ha-kohen. V'yatsa ha-kohen el-
michuts lamachaneh**

in the day of his cleansing. And he shall be brought to the priest; & the priest shall go
outside the camp

וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָיָה זָרָפָא נָעִיר הַצִּרְעָה מִן-הַצְּרוּעַ:

v'ra'ah ha-kohen v'hineh nirpa nega ha-tsara'at min-ha-tsarua.

and the priest shall look, (to examine if) the infection of leprosy has been healed in the
leper.

B'rit Hadashah: Hebrews 10:10

....we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Messiah, Yeshua,
once for all.

God's Gospel Message, Calling His People to be a Distinct People

We tend to think of God's gospel message originating with the **B'rit Hadashah** because the Church has given us this idea. However, God has always wanted humankind to worship Him. God's people (both Jews & Gentiles) are called by Him to be a distinct people, a separate people (sanctified), and a holy people. People groups should be able to see some things about our lives that are different from theirs. They should see that we separate ourselves from things that they intuitively know are "impure." They should be able to see in our everyday living that our desire is to be holy because our God is holy. God's desire for His people to live holy, distinct lives as a witness to other people groups originated with God's call to Abram and His commands to His people, Israel: "By those who come near Me, I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored"....."and so to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean,...." (**Leviticus**

10:3,10). Originally it was Israel that proclaimed the first gospel message to other people groups by living distinct, separate, and holy lives in obedience to God's commands. One might even look back to God's call to Abram in **Genesis 12** to separate himself from his people and follow God's direction to "parts unknown." It has always been God's desire to call to Himself a people who would worship Him alone and be the conduit through which other peoples could join themselves to Him.

God's method of illustrating for His people His desire for them to be His own distinct and holy people was through prescribed ceremonial ritual, which served as a picture of Man's "pure" or "impure" state. Only those who were ritually pure ("**tahor**") could approach their holy God in worship. However, there was always a provision made for those who were "impure" ("**tamei**") to be restored to "purity," if they would obey God's rules, administered by the Levites. We have already seen that animals used for sacrifice had to be "without blemish." So also those who brought the sacrifice had to be "whole" ("**tam**"). No person "contaminated" ("**tum'ah**") or "impure" ("**tamei**") could approach God. There was/is only one way to worship God.....God's way! The Levites only allowed those who were "whole," and "pure" to bring their sacrifices in faith, belief, and in obedience to God's commands. God's sacrificial law was a foreshadow of the future sacrifice of Messiah. Today **all** who apprehend the sacrifice of Messiah, Yeshua, in faith, belief, and in obedience to God's commands are made perfect and sanctified in God's sight. God forgives their sins and lawless deeds and no longer remembers them (Hebrews 10:1,10).

The Impurity of childbirth - Leviticus, Chapter 12

After the birth of a child, there is a period of time in which the mother is "**tamei**," ritually unclean. This carries the meaning that the mother is in a condition that prevents her from entering into the Tabernacle or Temple. She is not allowed to enter into congregational life. After the prescribed time, she must bring a sin offering to the priest to make atonement, as a public picture that she has been cleansed of her impurity. Since **Genesis 1:28** commands God's people to be "fruitful and multiply," there is no sin in childbirth. However, the natural oozing of bodily fluids that results from childbirth, renders the woman "**tamei**," according to the ritual. No "impure" person can enter into congregational life to have a personal relationship with the Holy God of Israel. Understanding this picture of our relationship with God allows each of us to re-examine our own lives; to repent, when we are convicted that we have sinned against God; to ask forgiveness both from God and from those we may have offended, when we are led by the Ruach (Spirit) to do so.

There has been much Rabbinic discussion as to why the period of "**tamei**" is twice as long after the birth of a girl than after the birth of a boy. Our knowledge of procreation has greatly increased since much of the Rabbinic commentary of the middle ages was given. Rabbinic pronouncements of theology based upon a poor understanding of procreation science have resulted in the misapplication of Rabbinic law that effects women even today. This Shabbat we will discuss some of these Rabbinic commentaries relating to why the mother of a baby girl is "unclean" twice as long as she would be after the birth of a baby boy. I have spoken with an Orthodox Rabbi, who admitted that he did not have a good understanding of these matters, citing

different, conflicting rulings from several Rabbinic sources. After the prescribed time, the woman would immerse herself in a ritual bath (**mikveh**) and be considered ritually clean, but he could not answer why the woman's period of "uncleaness" was twice as long after the birth of a girl, than after the birth of a boy. His incite to me was that in practice in the US, it is considered a "bother" that a woman in menstruation or having recently given birth would attend services. It is generally recommended that they remain home. However, there is no declaration by a **Kohen** (descendant of Aaron) that the woman is "unclean."

The Impurity of **Tsara'at - Leviticus, Chapters 13 & 14**

"**Tsara'at**" is a spreading skin disease or infection of the surface of the skin that can result in the oozing of bodily fluids. It has been misintrepreted in the past as Leprosy (Hansen's Disease) and even translated as "Leprosy" in todays Bibles. However, the meaning of "**tsara'at**" comes from a root that means a "mark or a stroke." It is considered a "**nig'ei**," a plague on the skin. The connotation of the word is indicative of the rough, scaley, or encrusted appearance of the skin. It could also include macular (a discolored stain or spot or thickening of the surface of the skin), papular (a small, circumscribed, superficial elevation of the skin), or vesicular (small, circumscribed blister-like elevations of the skin containing a serous fluid) eruptions of the skin. There are many dermatologic conditions that could be called "**tsara'at**." Psoriasis, eczema, leucodermia, vitiligo, candidiasis (thrush), chicken pox, ringworm, scabies, some sexually transmitted diseases, and any infection that produced a rash could be classified by the priests as "**tsara'at**." Any raw flesh, resulting from burns or even poor wound care, boils, and skin infections in the hair or beard could render the person "**tamei**," **ritually unclean**. Even garments or the stones of a house could become contaminated, "**tum'ah**," by mold or mildew and be considered "**nig'ei habayit**," a house plague. In **Leviticus**, Chapter 14:33-53, "house leprosy" is indicated only "when you enter the land of Canaan." Therefore one might think that only houses can become contaminated with "plague" within the land of Israel. My orthodox Rabbi friend says that there is no **Gemara** (Jewish commentary) on this subject, and therefore the declaration of a house as "unclean" is not practiced in the US or in Israel today.

One of the biblically prescribed jobs of the Levites was to observe and diagnose (not medically treat) any person, garment, or home having one of these conditions. The infected person must allow inspection by the Levites. If the condition worsened or spread, the priest was to pronounce them "unclean," which they would remain for the rest of their lives, unless miraculously cured. Later, however, if the condition healed or resolved (a different condition than "lerposy" that resolved on its own), the Levite would pronounce the person "**tahor**," ritually clean. Some garments would be scrubbed or might have to be destroyed, and some stones would have to be removed from the house, or the whole house dismantled, if the priest thought the mold or mildew was spreading.

In Biblical times, the person with a spreading skin infection was isolated from the camp. He had to loosen his hair (a sign of mourning), since he was considered as dead, tear part of his clothes, cover his mustache, and cry out "unclean, unclean" so as to avoid contact with others. Today, physicians would treat these bacterial infections

but might also isolate the infected person for a time. We have also found that mold and mildew can spread airborne illness necessitating its removal from homes and air conditioning ducts. **Viruses such as the Covid19 virus are highly contagious, especially to the elderly or others with weak immune systems, requiring quarantine to inhibit spread.** In Biblical times, it would have been considered a miracle for an individual with "leprosy" to be cured, which is why Yeshua, after curing a leper who came to Him in faith for healing, told the man to go show his cleansing to the priest, as a testimony, and as prescribed by the law. "Lepers" were kept apart from the people of God. They were not able to offer sacrifices to God or to enter into community activities. They were considered as "dead men walking" because in those days without a miracle of God, there was no cure.



The Typology of **Tsara'at**

In ancient Rabbinic thought, **tsara'at** was caused by slander (**lashon hara**), bloodshed, false oaths, or immorality. Obviously, bloodshed (wound infection) and immorality (the vesicles or warts of sexually transmitted diseases) could produce a spreading skin infection. But how about slander and false oaths? This Shabbat, we'll look at Rabbinic thought in this area. Because it was thought that "leprosy" was the result of sin, there have been discussions on the parallels between "leprosy" and sin. Both are: 1) "in the blood" 2) loathsome...offending in loathsome ways. 3) begin in a small way 4) spread, if it is not stopped 5) produce sores and marks 6) are not curable by human means 7) would be fatal if not stopped 8) kill slowly 9) separate the person from God.

Thought Question: How can we today avoid **Lashon hara?** We **first** must develop habits to negate evil speaking. One habit might be that when we are tempted to verbally retort, we just keep silent. Keeping silent is not an easily accomplished, when one is in the habit of responding in like kind, when there is a perceived insult or feeling of being made to be inferior. Keeping silent is a trait that must be learned through practice, practice, practice. Even when we have learned to keep silent most of the time, when we feel we have been offended, silence is not a positive trait. While silence might negate **lashon hara**, it does little to make for positive feelings for anyone. So **secondly**, we must learn to return good words to replace evil words: **Lashon tov** (good speech) to replace **lashon hara**. Replying positively to someone, who is trying to denigrate you is more difficult than just keeping silent, but finding a way to be positive in reply has the possibility of healing for both people. How can we first learn to be silent when verbally confronted, and then to reply positively? One way might be to remember our position in lieu of what God has done

for us through Messiah, while we are totally undeserving. What is then our responsibility to return good speech for evil speech, reflecting God's graciousness to us? After awhile of only speaking lashon tov, we will learn to extinguish even hearing lashon hara, as it applies to us. The same mechanism can be applied to seeing evil.... But that's a topic for another forum.



Speak no Evil, See no Evil, Hear no Evil



God's Provision of Cleansing from "Leprosy"

In this Torah portion, we also will find God's provision for cleansing from "leprosy." God always gives us hope. He always makes provision for our being returned "**tahor**," clean into His presence. No matter what is your own personal "leprosy," God has made provision to return you to wholeness and to relationship with Him. As was said above, each individual must apprehend (take grasp of) God's provision for restoration. Anyone (Jew or Gentile) who apprehends the sacrifice of Messiah, Yeshua, in faith, belief, and in obedience to God's commands is made perfect and sanctified in God's sight. God forgives their sins and lawless deeds and no longer remembers them (Hebrews 10:1,10). When the Judge of the universe, looks at each of us, will He find us acceptable, according to His standards, or will he see us as "unclean," separate and apart from Him?

SHABBAT SHALOM

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul and with all your heart."*

**Our love for Hashem must permeate every aspect of our physical,
intellectual, and emotional expression.**