

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5778 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

May 26th – 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 11

Numbers 4:21 - 22

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

Va-y'daber Adonai el-Moshe lemor.

And the Lord spoke to Moses saying,

נָשָׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי גֵרְשׁוֹן גַּם־הֵם לְבֵית אֲבוֹתָם לְמִשְׁפְּחוֹתָם:

Naso et-rosh b'nei Gershon gam-hem l'veit avotam l'mish'p'chotam.

"Elevate (the) head(s) (take a census of) (the) sons of Gershon,
by their fathers house and by their families."

Numbers 6:22-27

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

Va-y'daber Adonai el-Moshe lemor.

And the Lord spoke to Moses saying,

דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו לֵאמֹר כֹּה תְבַרְכוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָמַר לָהֶם:

Daber el-Aharon v'el-banav lemor koh t'varachu et-b'nei Yisra'el amor lahem.

Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶכָה: יָאֵר יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיְחַנֶּנֶךָ:

Y'varechecha Adonai v'yishmerecha. Ya'er Adonai panav eleicha vichuneka.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

יִשָּׂא יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם:

Yisa Adonai panav eleicha v'yasem l'cha shalom.

The Lord lift up His countenance on you and give you peace.

Numbers 4:21 - 7:89

Before the Journey begins: Preparation & Separation



In this Torah portion, **Naso** (elevate - take a census), we can see God working methodically in the lives of His people. God gave Moses orders for the orderly march of His people towards the land He promised to Abraham and his descendents forever. Preparation for the march involved both physical (logistical) preparation and spiritual preparation. The physical preparation required the assembling of the people by tribes into an orderly arrangement and the assembly/disassembly of God's tabernacle, where His visible presence dwelled among His people. Spiritual preparation for the journey involved the **separation of the people from things that "defiled" them**. The basis of their spiritual preparation was their obedience, faith, trust, and worship of God alone. We will observe in the next several Torah portions that the undoing of God's people was their failure to prepare themselves spiritually, fully trusting the leadership of God through Moses. We, too, may be prepared for life in the physical realm. We may have gone to the right schools and possess impressive degrees and great jobs, but without the proper spiritual preparation of obedience, faith, trust, and worship of God alone we, like the Israelites, may find ourselves wandering in circles through life!

The **physical part** of their journey in this Torah portion began with the taking of a special census of the tribe of the Levites in Chapter 4:21. The Levites were counted according to their clans: Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. The males were counted from the age of thirty to fifty, as this would be the age of their "service" in the tabernacle. In verses 23 and 24 the same Hebrew word, "**avodah**" is translated both "service" and "work." Interestingly there are four Hebrew words representing different aspects of "service" to God's tabernacle. All of these words may be translated "service," "work," or "duty." Since they represent different aspects of service to God, which are applicable to us today, we should look briefly at these four Hebrew words. "**Mishmeret**" literally means "God duty" and can be translated "duty." We think of soldiers at their place of duty or prison guards on guard duty. Being at services ahead of time to help set up or ladies organizing the Shabbat Oneg might be considered "God duty," being in the right place at the right time to be of service. Several examples are found in Chapter 4, verses 27,28, and 31. "**Melacha**" has to do with service to God

involving skilled work in **Chapter 4**, verse 3, where it is simply translated "work." Obviously much of the work of the tabernacle required skilled craftsmen, who needed to be available for this "work." Today, instrumentalists, singers, and even people skilled in computer use, as well as cabinet makers could qualify as skilled workers and are necessary for a coordinated, spiritually moving, and functional service. "**Avodah**" is the word usually translated as "work," having to do with physical work. There was so much physical work involved with the transport and setting up of the tabernacle that "**avodah**" was used quite often. Doing the physical work that enabled the tabernacle service to take place was a coordinated effort by many people. Today it is said that 90% of the "**avodah**" is done by 10% of the people. We could take a lesson from the tabernacle service, where every male Levite between 30 and 50 years old had a particular job coordinated with others. "**Lesharet**" involved the actual service, what we today might call "ministry." It is found in **Chapter 3:6,31** and **Chapter 4:12,14**, usually translated "serve" or "service." Today without Levites and a tabernacle, it is the minister of God's word and perhaps the minister of music, who conduct the service.

The total number of Levite men eligible for tabernacle service in its various forms were 8,580 men. In **Chapter 7** we find that each clan was given a particular number of carts and animals to pull them, according to their workload. The Gershonites, who were responsible for the hangings and covering of the Tabernacle had fewer carts than did the Merarites, who had to transport all the heavy framing pieces of wood and metal. Each of the rest of the tribes contributed the same offering of carts, animals, and service utensils to the Levites. **The principle - both then and now - is that God's people supply the physical needs for the on-going of God's ministry among His people.**

Examples of the **spiritual preparation** of the people is found in **Chapters 5 and 6**. God told Moses that the people should separate themselves from things that "defile" them. Today we would call "sin" something that defiles us. The leper and the corrupt flesh of a dead person were considered examples of things that defiled in the days of Moses. Anything that defiled was to be put outside the camp because God lived within the camp. God could not then and cannot today live amidst defiled people. **Today believers can become defiled by sin and must "put it out of their camp" in order to maintain fellowship with God!!** In Moses' day, if one was to be restored after being cured of his defilement, he must in faith and obedience to God's word through Moses, bring an offering to the priest and confess his sin, counting on the shed blood of the slain animal to provide atonement. Today, the shed blood of Messiah, Yeshua, has already atoned for the defilement of sin.....**Hebrews 9:14**. Believers in the atoning sacrifice of Messiah are spiritually separated (sanctified) for God's service for all time.....**Hebrews 10:10**. **If we become defiled by sin, we must repent and confess our sin to our High Priest, Yeshua, to put sin "out of our camp" and maintain fellowship with God. 1st John 1:7,9** tells us that our fellowship with God is maintained because God is... "faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."



God is the Righteous Judge

God's Priests provide both Blessings & Curses

The above examples are public examples of defilement, but what about defilement in which there are no witnesses to come forward to accuse the sinner? The answer is that God is the witness. In the example of adultery in **Chapter 5**, God brought about a "spirit of jealousy" in the husband, so that he suspected his wife's defilement. If the wife was guilty, she would bring sterility upon herself, but if she was innocent, she would be guaranteed by God to have children, as a picture of her innocence.

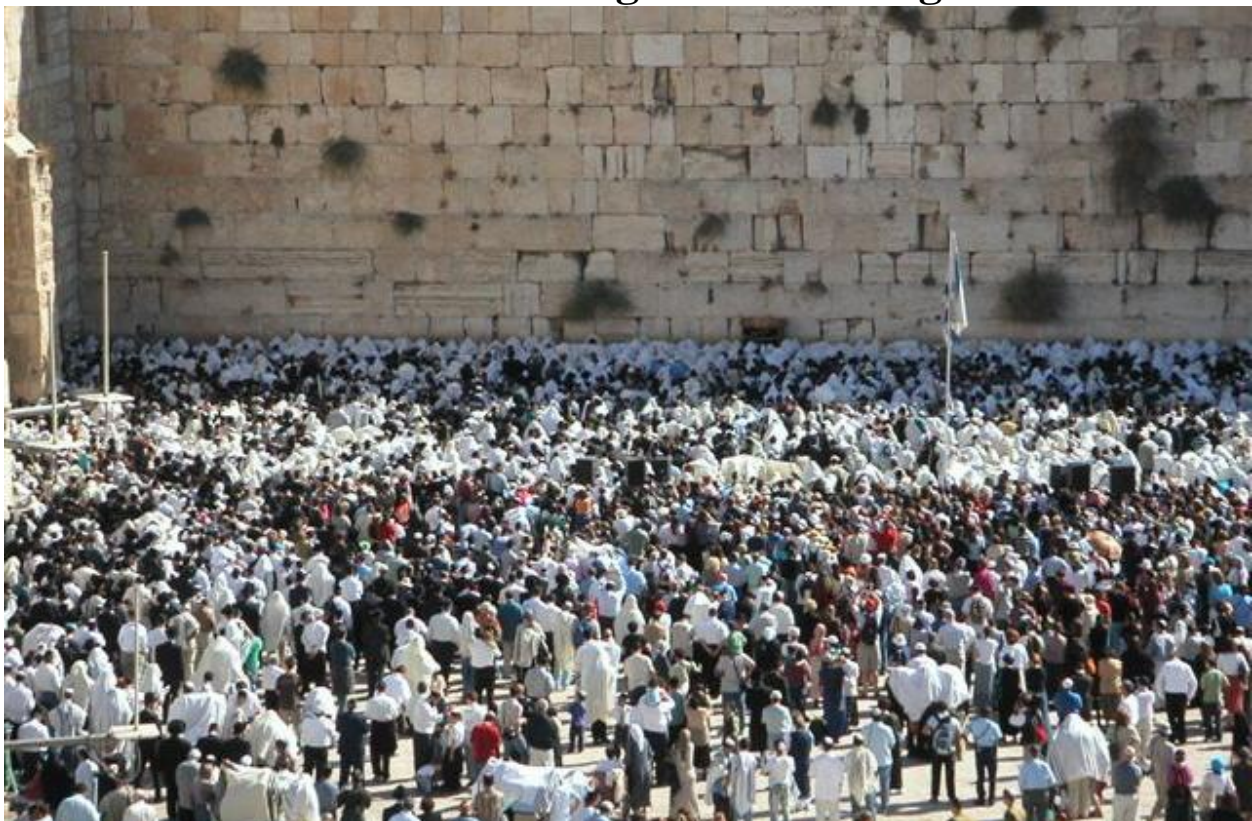
The following teaching regarding God's justice in our world is taken from Rabbi Russ Resnik: The priest takes some of the dust from the floor of the tabernacle, mixes it with holy water in an earthen vessel to make "bitter water" (Num. 5:18). He gives it to the alleged adulteress declaring, "May this water that causes the curse go into your stomach, and make your belly swell and your thigh rot." Then the woman shall say, 'Amen, so be it.' Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall scrape them off into the bitter water" (Num. 5:22–23). If the woman is guilty, the curse will enter her with the water, but if she is innocent, she will remain unharmed. Normally justice depends on the wisdom of human judges. But no one can know whether the accused woman is guilty or innocent. Her husband has become infected by "the spirit of jealousy." Something must be done to restore justice, and God makes a special provision. Ramban (**Rabbi Moses ben Nachman**) – (1194-1270), notes that the miraculous nature of this ordinance reflects the unique condition of Israel at the time, newly delivered from bondage and living in the presence of the **Shechinah**, the glory-cloud of God. Later, as the spiritual condition of Israel declined and adultery became more widespread, the Talmud says, the bitter water ceased to be effective (Sotah 47b). But in better days, God intervenes to restore justice. We saw a similar intervention in the case of Nadab and Abihu, who were struck down by a fire from the Lord's presence because they offered "strange fire" (Lev. 10), and we will see it again shortly in the rebellion of Korach (Num. 16). Centuries later, the early Messianic community experiences divine intervention in the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). In each of these cases, God acts supernaturally to restore justice because he is so present within the community that he cannot allow disorder to remain. Later, as sin increases, God ceases to intervene so directly. God's miraculous intervention in the ordinance of the accused woman does not come directly, however, but at the hands of the priest, who is empowered to call down a curse upon the guilty. In contrast, in the next chapter, God appoints this same priest as the agent of blessing. Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, "This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: 'The Lord bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give

you peace.” (Num. 6:24–26). The same priests who are the instruments of cursing pronounce the blessing. Both judgment and blessing can be signs of God’s presence among his people.

Once some scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, “in the very act,” to Yeshua, saying: “Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” (**John 8:5**). Instead of answering, Yeshua wrote in the dirt, perhaps as a reminder of the dust stirred into the bitter water of Numbers 5. Then he said, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first” (**John 8:7**). At this word, the woman’s accusers slipped off one by one, and the woman was not condemned. Where sin is abundant, God may delay his judgment. Instead, he provides a time of forgiveness so that the holiness of the community can be reestablished. Complete justice awaits the Age to Come when the purity and holiness of creation Creation are fulfilled. In the meantime, the ordinance of bitter water reminds us of the pervasiveness of sin, which requires that justice be tempered with mercy. God mixes mercy with judgment so the world may endure. No priest in Israel has employed the bitter water for nearly two thousand years, but the descendants of Aaron continue to pronounce the blessing of Numbers 6:24–26 to this day.

In **Chapter 6**, the vow of a Nazarite is an example of spiritual separation from the world, similar in some aspects to the separation of the priests and the High Priest for God's service. The nazarite had to separate himself from 1) things of pleasure...the grape and its juice in various forms; 2) the razor....so that everyone could know him by sight and hold him accountable for his vow; 3) from defilement from being around a dead person.

The Aaronic Blessing at the Wailing Wall



Probably the most important verses in this Torah portion are found in **Chapter 6: 24-26**. This is where God told Moses to tell Aaron how to bless the people. This "Aaronic Blessing" is said, chanted, or sung in many Jewish services. In three statements of blessing, Aaron reminds the people that God is the one in whom their faith and trust should reside because He is the one who

will be watching over them, keeping them safe, secure, and prosperous, and providing them with the inner peace in their soul that only He can provide. That was true in the days of Moses and also is true today. All of our Torah portions end with "**Shabbat Shalom**," "Sabbath peace." This inner soul peace that only God can give is best stated in **John 14:27**: "Peace ("**shalom**") I leave with you, My peace ("**shalom**") I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." **Our spiritual peace is contingent upon our acceptance of God's atonement provided by Messiah, Yeshua, and our following in the "footsteps of Messiah" in our daily lives!**

Offerings from every Tribe

Chapter 7 is inserted here to explain the mechanics of how the Kohathites, the Gershonites, and the Merarites would do the physical work, "avodah," of moving the tabernacle. However, from the explanation in the first verse that this event took place..."on the day that Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle..." we understand that it occurred the same day as the events of **Exodus 40:17**; one month earlier than **Numbers 1:1**; while the book of **Leviticus** was being written. The leaders ("princes, elevated ones") (**nesi'ey, nesi'im, vs.2,10**) of every tribe organized their tribes to work together to make 6 carts for the transport of the tabernacle. Two tribes worked together to make each cart and provided two oxen to pull it. The leaders presented the carts to Moses, who divided them up proportionally among the two Levite clans, who would be using them to transport their assigned loads. Four carts were given to the Merarites, who had the assignment to disassemble and move the heavy framework of the tabernacle. Two carts were given to the Gershonites, whose job was to disassemble and move the curtains and hangings that went over the framework of the tabernacle. Since the service of the Kohathites was to carry the furniture of the tabernacle upon their shoulders, they required no carts. In addition, each of the leaders presented an offering from their tribe that would be of use in the tabernacle ministry. Each tribe willingly and without murmuring presented the same offering without regard to the size of their individual tribe. They brought a silver dish, a silver bowl, and a gold pan.....all of prescribed weight. These could have been used for service with the table of showbread, the altar of incense, or to collect sacrificial blood. Each tribe also brought burnt offerings, sin offerings, and peace offerings possibly totalling 252 animals altogether.

So far we have observed the people of God, having repented from their sin of disbelief and idolatry involving the golden calf, following God's instructions through Moses completely and without disharmony, as they prepared to set out for their short journey to the land promised to them by God. They worked together within their tribes and coordinated their efforts among all the tribes through individual tribal leadership. It could further be considered remarkable among the Levites that supervision for the tabernacle's assembly and transport (accomplished by the clans of Gershon and Merari) was by Ithamar, who was a Kohathite. As Moses entered the tabernacle to speak with God, Moses must have been pleased to have seen such cooperation.

Today, it's common to hear that we just don't have the manpower, ability, or finances as a congregation to accomplish God's ministry. We need to grow more. We need to find the right people to help us. Perhaps we would do well to consider God's people, Israel, at this point in their journey. Only a year before, they were the slaves of Pharaoh. Yes, they made mistakes on their way to this point and would make mistakes in the future, but at least at this point they understood that all they needed to accomplish God's purpose for them was to dedicate themselves to following Him!

Our congregation (our tribe) must dedicate ourselves to following God through congregational ministry (Lesharet), knowing that He will lead us to provide the people and

financial resources necessary. It was through the dedication of the tribes in this newly formed nation that resources to construct and minister in the tabernacle were gathered. **It will be through our dedication to attend services, learn scriptural applications, and support each other in congregational ministry that we will have the resources to accomplish our congregational goals, bringing the Gospel of Messiah to everyone...to the Jew first (Romans 1:16).**

SHABBAT SHALOM

