



LT TORAH TO GO



Volume 13 - Issue 31

Edited by Rabbi Mara Nathan on behalf of generations of Torah Learners at Larchmont Temple.

EXPERIENCE TORAH THIS WEEK: April 19-25
EREV SHABBAT 8:00PM
SHABBAT AM SERVICE SATURDAY 10:30AM

SHABBAT TAZRIA-METZORA 5769

Leviticus 12:1-15:33

pp. 826-854 in Torah, a Modern Commentary

PSHAT... *The plain/simple story*

Parashat Tazria presents the ritual of purification for a woman after childbirth. During the time of her impurity she may not come into contact with anything or any place that is holy. When the period of impurity is over, the woman is instructed to bring an offering to the Tabernacle where the priest will make atonement on her behalf and declare her ritually pure. Moses and Aaron are instructed in the diagnosis of *tzara'at*-an ailment which could affect human skin or clothing rendering a person or garment ritually impure. Rashes, discolorations and patches of the skin and clothes are examined by the priest who will determine the existence of this affliction. In cases of doubt, he is empowered to isolate the individual or article in question for a period of seven days in order to observe the progression of the ailment. At the end of such a period the priest must pronounce the person ritually pure (*tahor*) or impure (*metzora*.)

REMEZ... *Looking for clues*

KOSHI.... What does Tzara'at of houses really mean?

TALMUD....There has never been, nor will there every be, a house smitten with *tzara'at*. Why then was the law given? To study it and be rewarded for studying it.

SFORNO...When the majority of the people follow God's ways, He....singles out certain individuals, and warns them by means of *tzara'at* on their garments...and if this has not achieved its object, they will be reminded of their sinful behavior through an entirely unnatural phenomenon- *tzara'at* on the house walls....since the generations failed to attain this high level, and therefore did not merit this Divine compassion, there is no record of the incidence of the *tzara'at* of houses. Some of our sages thus remarked that they never existed.

LEIBOWITZ...We do not associate *tzara'at* with fungus covering the plaster and penetrating into the walls until they crumble. Rather, *tzara'at* is a Divine signal to the straying soul to return to the way of the Torah, a sublime manifestation of God's desire to bring the sinner back to Him.

DRASH... *Discovering Meaning...*

VAYIKRA RABBAH....This is an allegory for the stages of Jewish history until the destruction of the Temple, and also a message of comfort, the rebuilding of the Third and eternal Temple.

"And I will put the plague of *tzara'at* in a house of the I and of your possession"— this refers to the Temple, as it is stated: "Behold I will profane my Sanctuary, the pride of your strength" (Ezekiel 23:21); "And he that owns the house shall come"- this refers to the Lord, as it is stated "Because of My house that lies waste" (Haggai 1:9); "and tell the priest"- this refers to Jeremiah, as it is stated: "Of the priests who were in Anatot" (Jeremiah 1:1); "It seems to me there is as it were a plague in the house"- the obscenity of idolatry is meant by this, as it is stated: "And behold, northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry..." (Ezekiel 8:5). "Then the priest shall command that they empty the house"- "and he (Shishak, King of Egypt) took away the treasures of the House of the Lord" (1 Kings 14:26); "And he shall break down the house"- "...who (Nebuchadnezzar, King of Bavel) destroyed this house" (Ezra 5:12); "And he shall carry them out of the city"—"and carried the people away to Bavel" (Ezra 5:12). But it will not last forever, for it is stated: "And they shall take other stones," and as the prophecy states: "Therefore, thus says God: I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation- he that believes shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16)

Yashar Koach to this week's B'not Mitzvah:

JULIA BELL & JULIA RODBELL

Come hear them teach Torah this Saturday at 10:30AM

SOD...Finding Ourselves

....I found the part that deals with a community being infected with disease very interesting. I wondered how a community could be infected with a disease that is not a real sickness. So I came to the conclusion that the word "disease" doesn't have to be a real illness, but can represent the way that people treat each other.

Modern Israeli scholar Nehama Leibowitz explains that when a house becomes diseased with mold it is G-d's way of teaching a lesson. Just like you often neglect mold in your house until it is a serious issue, we often don't take negative behavior seriously until it is out of control. She says, "The plague teaches us that society should take notice of the first sign of misconduct, however small. Just the same as a disease begins with hardly noticeable symptoms and can be stopped if detected in time, so a moral disease can be stopped from spreading if immediate steps are taken. Otherwise it will spread throughout the community." I agree with Leibowitz's statement because it is something we have all learned. If you see someone gossiping or teasing, or mistreating somebody, you should try and stop it, because if you don't the idea of it will spread. Then more and more people will think it is okay to do, and before you know it, your community has become infected.

When I thought about how this relates to us as Jews, I thought about how the Jews were blamed for Europe's problems before the Second World War. The Nazis, during their rise to power, took advantage of the rumors that people spread about the Jews and then were able to do serious damage to the Jewish community. The Germans, instead of standing up to the Nazis, allowed them to spread hate through the whole country. This was the disease that spread through the European community and created the disaster for the Jews known as the Holocaust. But the disease wasn't an actual illness; it was hatred and rumor. That led to much pain and suffering.....

-JULIA BELL

....Metzora is about leprosy and how the high priests dealt with lepers in the community. Because it was considered to be very contagious, this disease was like chicken pox or the measles of present day.

People who had leprosy were quarantined outside of the neighborhood. The high priests of each community had a job to check on the leper after a certain amount of time to see if they were clean again. If they were, the priest would hold a sacrificial ceremony to welcome the leper back into the community. Even though the high priests were in charge and could make anyone they wanted do the dirty work, they went out of their way to take care of the lepers themselves, even though they knew they were in danger of catching the infectious disease. This insured that even though the lepers were isolated, they knew they weren't forgotten.

The Hasidic commentary, Si'ah Ha-sadeh, says "the priest is the righteous one...but God wants the leaders to give the people the benefit of the doubt. Thus the Torah tells us that the priest must go forth out of the camp – he has to put himself in the place of the leper, outside the priests own camp – and it is then that the priest will see that the leper will be healed".

I agree with the Hasidic commentary because even though there is no more high priest and leprosy is extremely rare, what the priest did is something we can still learn from today. Even though the priest is a great, powerful and respected man, he puts himself in a very dangerous position to help just one person. The priest doesn't do this because of what he will receive in return, but because it is the right thing to do. It reminds him that the leper is a person too and deserves attention and respect....

-JULIA RODBELL

MITZVAH of the WEEK...

JULIA BELL chose to volunteer at the Multiple Sclerosis Society. *"I have volunteered there once a week helping the organization prepare for the MS walk that was last weekend. I also walked in the walk with my mom. My mitzvah project relates to my Torah portion because the MS Society is a group of individuals trying to help make a better community by making sure that everyone afflicted with this disease will be taken care of. I really enjoyed helping out at the MS society, and I feel really good knowing that I helped the cause."*

JULIA RODBELL spent time visiting elderly people at the Osborn and Sarah Neuman. *"They are very nice places, but different from living in your own home with neighbors and family members that you know well. I visited a couple of elderly people many times over the past year.... This relates to my Torah portion because sometimes society separates elderly people from others and they can feel isolated or forgotten. As the high priests visited the lepers to let them know they were still connected to the community, I visited the elderly. Not because I had to, but because I wanted to. ..."*