

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5785 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

May 10th 10:30AM Lolo Community Synagogue

12:30PM Oneg Shabbat & Interactive Torah Discussion



Acharei Mot (after the death) - Leviticus 16:1-2

Va-y'daber Adonai el-Moshe acharei mot sh'nei b'nei Aharon
b'korvatam lifnei-Adonai va-yamootoo.

And the Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron,
when they came before the presence of the Lord and died.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ וְאֵל-יָבֹא בְּכָל-עֵת אֶל-הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבֵּית

Va-yomer Adonai el-Moshe daber el-Aharon
achicha v'al-yavo v'chol-et el-hakodesh mi-b'yeet

And the Lord said to Moses, "Tell your brother Aaron
that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside

לְפָרֹכֶת אֶל-פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא יָמוּת כִּי בִּיעֲזֹן אֶרְאֶה עַל-הַכַּפֹּרֶת:

laparochet el-peney hakaporet asher al-ha'aron velo yamut
ki be'anan era'eh al-hakaporet.

the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die;
for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

Haftarah - Ezekiel 21:1-16

The haftarah for Parashat Acrei Mot is mostly a list of offenses committed by people in what Ezekiel calls the "city of bloodshed" (22:1) or Jerusalem. The list of crimes is so heinous that the word "blood" appears seven times. The people of Jerusalem are guilty of killing innocent people. They have oppressed the downtrodden: strangers, orphans, and widows. Children have humiliated their own parents. Sexual impropriety is rampant - the people have engaged in adultery and incest, and have slept with menstruating women. Worst of all, God concludes, "you have forgotten Me" (22:12). God will not let these deeds go unpunished, Ezekiel promises. He reports on God's plans: "I will disperse you through the lands; I will consume the uncleanness out of you. You shall be dishonored in the sight of nations, and you shall know that I am the Lord" (22:15-16).

B'rit Hadashah – Hebrews 9:12

through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all,
having obtained eternal redemption.



The Law of the Day of Atonement

Chapter 16 is one of the most important chapters in the whole book of Leviticus because it tells us God's requirements for the Day of Atonement. Although we will be given some additional instruction concerning the Day of Atonement in Chapter 23, the major portion is found in Chapter 16. The Day of Atonement can be said to be the most important day of the Jewish religious calendar for this is the day that brings together two parties, who are at enmity with each other....God and man. Apart from the atonement provided by God for this purpose, sinful man cannot approach Adonai Tzivaot (The Lord of Hosts). Absolute holiness cannot exist in the presence of sin. A familiar example illustrating this concept is found in **Matt. 27:46** and **Mark 15:34**, quoting **Psalm 22:1**, where God turns away from Messiah, as Messiah bears the sins of the world. Even the English word "atonement" (at-one-ment) portrays the idea of two coming together as one. Interestingly, the English word "atonement" occurs 110 times in the Tanakh (Old Testament) **but is not used even once in the B'rit Hadashah** (New Testament). **Why do you think this is the case?** Hint: The Hebrew word that is translated "atonement"

is "**Kaporet**" from the Hebrew root "**kaphar**" meaning "**to cover.**" We also find it used in **Genesis 6:14**, where Noah is told to "**cover**" the ark with pitch. In Hebrew the **Day of Atonement** is "**Yom Kippur**"...literally, "**the day of covering.**" The lid (cover) of the ark of the covenant, upon which the sacrificial atonement blood was sprinkled was called "the mercy seat." It was in a cloud over the mercy seat that God appeared. **Did God remove sins or just cover them?**

Thought Question - Are Sins Removed or Covered?

Can the case be made that "atonement" in the **Tanakh** is a limited concept, having to do with the yearly "**covering**" of sins? While in the **B'rit Hasashah**, the picture is the "**removal**" of sins (as far as the East is from the West) by the shed blood of Messiah, rather than the simple yearly "covering" of sins.

Another school of thought found later in this Chapter in verses 10 & 21-22 would seem to illustrate that under the yearly sacrificial system on the Day of Atonement, the sins of the people were removed (dismissed or sent away).

This Shabbat, we will discuss the difference between sins that are "covered**" and sins that are "**removed**."** In preparation for this discussion, read **Hebrews Chapters 9 & 10** and ask yourself whether the sins for which the blood of Messiah atones are "covered" or "removed."

The Concept of Limited Access

Another concept from **Leviticus 16** with application to us today is **the concept of limited access**. From all of the peoples of the earth, **only one people, the nation of Israel**, were chosen by God to be "His people." From all of the tribes of the nation of Israel, **only one tribe, the Levites** were chosen by God to serve Him in **tabernacle (Temple) duties**. From the Levites, **only one clan, the kohanim**, were chosen by God to participate in His sacrificial service. From the priestly clan, **only one family, the family of Aaron**, was chosen from which the high priest could come. From the descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses, **only one man** would become the **high priest** and be allowed to **come into the presence of God**. **The high priest would only come into the presence of God one day of the year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.** And on that one day of the year, the Day of Atonement, **the high priest could only approach God on God's terms....with sacrificial blood to atone for his own sins.** Today we should not take for granted **that any believer can approach God at any time to worship!!** This is because of the finished work of Messiah "once for all," whose "better sacrificial blood" (**Hebrews 9:22-26**) allows us to come boldly into God's presence, as we would come to our own human father. **Today all believers in Messiah have unlimited access to God!**

Laws for the Sin Sacrifice

As was stated above, before the high priest could make atonement for the sins of the people, he first had to make atonement for his own personal sin (**Leviticus 9:7**). It was only then that he could offer the sacrifice that would atone for the national sins of Israel. Due to his elevated status as high priest, he brought his own bull, the most costly of all animals used for a sin sacrifice, for **his personal sin sacrifice**. The Hebrew from

Leviticus 16:6 could be translated, "He shall (begin by) presenting his own sin offering bull and atoning for himself and his family." From this we understand that our sin sacrifice must cost us something, personally. Even the high priest had to personally bear the cost for his own sin sacrifice. King David (**2nd Samuel 24:21-24**) came to Araunah, a citizen of Jerusalem, to build an altar on Mt. Moriah (where Abraham offered Isaac [**Genesis 22:2**] and where Solomon would later build the Temple [**2 Chronicles 3:1**]) to sacrifice for his sin. Although Araunah was willing to give King David the land and provide the wood and prescribed sacrifices, David refused saying, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God, which cost me nothing." **Especially on the Day of Atonement, we remember that our sin sacrifice provided by God, the Messiah, Yeshua, came with a price tag.** As our High Priest and the mediator between The Father and sinful mankind, **the price was a very personal price.....His own blood.**



The Scapegoat

After making atonement for his own sins and consecrating the holy place and its furniture, the High Priest sacrificed a ram for a burnt offering and brought two goats to make atonement for the sins of the people. One goat was slain, so that its blood could be used in the atonement process. The other goat was the goat to which the sins of the people were transferred by the high priest, as is seen in verse 21. This goat was called the "scapegoat" or "**azazal**," a word that is used only in this Chapter. The **Septuagint** (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) states that the "**azazal**" goat is "removed" or "dismissed" into a "cut off" land (like a wilderness...a land with no roads). Thus the sins of the people were "removed" or "dismissed" into the wilderness. Traditionally, a scarlet piece of woolen cloth was placed around its horns. As the goat was led away, the red cloth turned white, indicating God's acceptance of the sin offering for the people. This went on until 40 years before the destruction of the Temple....when Messiah was sacrificed for us. After that time, there was no need for God to accept another sin sacrifice, so the cloth remained red.

Once a year on the tenth day of the seventh month (the Hebrew month of **Tishri**), the High Priest would "cleanse" the people from their sins, as the people observed this day as a Sabbath of solemn rest and "humbled (internally afflicted) their souls." **This**

Shabbat we will discuss whether we today should "humble our souls" and, if so how we should do it.

Laws pertaining to Sacrifices and Blood

Chapter 17 tells God's people that their sacrifices should not be used similarly to those of other pagan nations. To be God's distinct people, their sacrifices must be done according to God's protocol given to the priests. For example, blood must not be used in a "common" way because ..."it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement" (vs.11). Even today **Jews do not eat foods with blood**, as part of the kosher laws. It might be interesting to note that this command predates the Mosaic law and can be found in **Genesis 9:4**. In the **B'rit Hadashah**, **one of the things that is asked of new gentile believers is to abstain from blood** (**Acts 21:25**), so that Jews could eat with Gentiles. Also, God's people should not make a sacrifice to other gods. For example, sacrificing to goat demons (Heb."serim") is mentioned in verse 7, as a type of spiritual adultery. As an aside, I have heard the term "spiritual adultery" thrown about by those who should know better. They make "spiritual adultery" into a trivial thing, rather than using the term as it is used in Scripture. "Spiritual adultery" is worshipping other gods, rather than the one true God, as is illustrated here in verse seven.

Maintaining Godly Sexual Relationships

Chapter 18 tells God's people that they should be seen as morally distinct in their sexual relationships. For example they should not practice the sexual relationships they saw practiced in Egypt (vs.3). Sexual relationships were to be practiced within the context of marriage. Marriage could not be between "close relatives." Adultery (vs.19) was not allowed and homosexuality was considered an abomination, mentioned along with bestiality as a perversion that caused defilement. I have been told by an Orthodox Rabbi from Borough park, N.Y. that each community has different standards for membership in their community. In some congregations homosexuals are allowed to become members, as long as they are not public activists. Openly adulterous relationships are allowed in some cases; for example, if the husband would not grant a divorce. His reasoning followed this "logic." Is not **lashon hara** (evil speaking; gossip; slander) also a sin? If congregations threw out everyone who spoke **lashon hara**, there wouldn't be anyone left. I suggested to him that he might lovingly confront the person, thus giving him the opportunity for **vidui** (confession of his sin) and **t'shuvah** (repentance), as is the model of Leviticus 16; failing to lovingly reprove is failure to love (**Leviticus 19:18**). So here's another thought question; one that occurs in our everyday living.

Thought Question for everyday living

1) **What standards for daily living are necessary for Congregation membership?** Once you begin lowering standards to "fit the community," how low are you willing to go? How does your answer fit with the concept of God's people as His distinct and holy people?

2) In some Orthodox congregations in Borough Park, NY, **only the Rabbi decides whether to quietly ask someone to leave the congregation. Do you agree that this decision should be the Rabbi's decision alone?** We will discuss this on Shabbat.

David Friedman PhD from Jerusalem related the meaning of keeping God's laws: "Leviticus 18:5 states: Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD. Let's look at the Hebrew in order to understand this verse. The verb **ushmartem** is used, meaning "**watching over, guarding something**". It is often a military term, describing what a military sentry does from his outpost. He carefully looks for any and everything that is out of the ordinary. **As a sentry watches over the field, so do we watch over the instructions in the Torah to carry them out.** A better translation of the rest of the verse could be a man will do them and so live. It is **not an optional clause** like some translations make it sound, as in "**if you want to live, do them.**"

K'doshim (holy ones) - Leviticus 19:1-20:27



וַיֹּדֶבֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל־כָּל־עֵדֻת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל

Va-y'daber Adonai el-Moshe lemor,
Daber el-kol-adat b'nei-Yisra'el

And the Lord spoke to Moses saying,
"Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

v'amarta alehem k'doshim tiheyu
ki kadosh ani Adonai Eloheychem.

and say to them, 'holy ones you shall be,
for I, the Lord your God am holy."

Haftarah - Ezekiel 22; 5-6,8-12

...thus says the Lord God, "On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them saying, 'I am the Lord your God;' on that day I swore to them to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands." And I said to them, "Cast away, each of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to me. They did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them to accomplish My anger against them, in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived in whose sight I made Myself known to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt. So, I took them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances by which if a man observes them, he will live. And also,

I gave them My sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them.

B'rit Hadashah – 1 Peter 1:15

(Be) like the Holy One who called you. Be holy yourselves also in all your behavior because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Laws for Daily Living — Being God's Distinct People

Chapter 19 contains 15 paragraphs of laws for daily living. Many of these laws are direct applications of the Ten Commandments. **Obedience to God's laws enables God's people to live a godly life, which keeps them His distinct, holy people, pleasing to their Creator.** To be one of God's "k'doshim" (holy ones), we must look at God and imitate His characteristics. We cannot be morally neutral! Each of these 15 paragraphs ends with ...**"I am the Lord your God," which is the basis for our obedience.** God's people are to **obey His laws out of respect for who God is, rather than the merits of any individual law.** Today, our obeying God in our daily lives is dependent on our relationship with Him. Is our desire to please God or to please ourselves? **The sacrifice that makes us righteous before God has already been made through the shed blood of Messiah, Yeshua.** Yet our continuing relationship and fellowship with God is still dependent upon our pleasing Him in our daily living through our obedience to scriptural principles. **The spread of God's gospel message is accomplished through God's "k'doshim" (holy people) living holy lives, distinct from the world, in accordance with His word!!** Peter admonishes us (**1Peter 1:14-16**) to be "obedient children"...."like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" (**Leviticus 19:2; 20:7**)

After God's admonition to be a holy people, the first law given to us is "reverence and honor" for one's father and mother. By "reverence" God is not asking children to worship their parents. Children are to hold their parents in the same awesome respect that they hold God. To honor one's parents in those days, prior to governmental support programs for the elderly, meant that children were to physically support their aged parents. **One may even suggest that it is likely that children who grow up with an "awesome respect" for the authority of their parents will also have an "awesome respect" for the authority of God.**

We are next told to **keep God's Sabbaths and not to worship idols** ("Elilim"...non-entities as opposed to "Elohim" the plural for "God"). Eating peace offerings within two days, verse 5, encourages the sharing of food in a community meal. Perhaps this is the Jewish basis for the **oneg** and the "pot luck" meal that follows some church services. Next is the admonition **to provide for the needy** of the whole community, whether or not they are Jews. The corners of fields were left for anyone who needed food. Any fruit or grain that "fell from the hand" (gleanings) was also left for the needy. This is one practical application of "loving your neighbor as yourself." Another is the admonition **not to lie, steal, or deal or swear falsely.** All of these things "profane the name of your God."

An interesting note involves the Hebrew word "**amito**," in verse 11, which only appears in Leviticus (8 times) and once in Zechariah. "**Amito**" literally means "one's equal." We are told not to lie to one's equal. In verse 11 and 25:14 and 17 it is translated "one another." In 18:20, 19:15 & 17, and 24:19, "**amito**, one's equal" is translated "your neighbor;" (who would be "your equal"). In 6:2, "**amito**" is translated "his companion" (who would be "his equal"). The reason for the importance of understanding the literal meaning for the Hebrew word "**amito**" is because of its Messianic context in Zechariah 13:7: "Awake O sword, against My Shepherd and against the man, My Associate, declares the Lord of hosts." "**Amito**" is translated "**My Associate**," but literally means "**My equal**." Always considered a Messianic text, **the Lord of Hosts is declaring Messiah to be His equal**. "The Lord is claiming identity of nature or unity of essence with His Shepherd, thus strongly affirming the Messiah's deity" (Bible Knowledge Commentary - Walvoord & Zuck).

The next several laws have to do with exploitation of the weak, slander, and hatred of your countrymen. We cannot exploit our neighbor, who is a hired laborer, by robbing him of wages due him. The hired laborer depended upon each day's wages for his daily food. In **Matthew 20:1-16**, Yeshua tells us a parable about hired workers, who are paid their wages each evening after their work is completed for that day. **James 5:4** speaks against the wealthy, who have withheld wages from laborers. We are not to exploit the deaf or the blind nor show favoritism, to the poor (in sympathy) or to the wealthy (in deference). **Justice must always be accomplished according to God's righteous standard**. We must not bear false witness against our neighbor by slander. Slander could result in someone being taken to court innocently and his life threatened. If he is falsely convicted and executed, the slanderer would be responsible before God for his blood. The Talmud (Erachin 15a) says that slander, "**lashon hara**" (tail-bearing; evil talk) kills three people: the speaker; the listener; the one spoken of.

Thought Question - **Lashon hara** (negative gossip, seeking to hurt)

1) Since "gossip" can be one of the most divisive practices in everyday life and in congregations, **how should it be dealt with**, and **who should deal with it**?

2) A Messianic Rabbi friend of mine deals with **lashon hara** himself and teaches his congregation to do so also. When someone first begins to utter negative, hurtful words, he slowly extends his hand and gently puts it up to the mouth of the individual (of the same sex) to blunt their words. With the opposite sex, he immediately walks away before they have finished speaking. Nothing more is said; the individual gets the message. **Do you think this practice is good? What would you do?**

Internal Conformity to God's Laws

The Mosaic law demands both external conformity as is seen in the above laws but also demands internal conformity. While God tells us to appear to our neighbors as His distinct, holy people, God also demands that **our internal thoughts, attitudes, enthusiasm, commitment, and passion** for Him (our **kavanot**) be consistent with His

laws. Outward appearances without proper **kavanah** cannot be consistently maintained.

It is sinful to hate (in one's heart) one's fellow countryman. Yeshua taught in **Matthew 5:21-26** that hating one's brother can lead to murder. We should reprove our neighbor if necessary, but we must do it in a way that is not sinful for us. Reproof should be accomplished in a spirit of meekness. **Failing to try to bring back your neighbor to God's scriptural standard is to participate in his guilt. Failing to reprove our neighbor is failing to love our neighbor.** Internal conformity to God's laws also dictates that we **do not even think about taking vengeance or bearing grudges.** Speaking for myself, this is one of the most difficult battles against the **yitzer hara** (our evil inclination). **We must be willing to sublimate "our rights" for the advancement of God's kingdom! Deuteronomy 32:35** states that vengeance and retribution belong to God. This is also repeated in **Romans 12:19** and **Hebrews 10:30**. Instead, **Leviticus 19:18** tells us, **we are to love our neighbor as ourself.** This **law of internal conformity** was said by **Rabbi Achiba to be the fundamental law of Torah**. Yeshua, in **Mark 12:31** (and many other places) said that loving one's neighbor as oneself was the second most important commandment... second only to one's love for God.

Motivation for Keeping God's Laws: To Please God

Jews are to observably keep themselves as God's distinct people. **We did not have to understand the "why's" behind God's laws.** We just have to keep them because we wanted to please Him. We have traditionally kept laws that might have not made common sense to us....just because God said so. For example, we were not allowed to do hybrid breeding with our sheep and cattle, nor sow hybrid seeds. We were not allowed to wear clothes with "mixed threads." Even the "kosher laws" that prescribed what may or may not be eaten may not have made sense to our ancestors (or to us today). But by keeping God's laws, and worshiping God in the distinctive way He prescribed, we were observably different from all other people groups, and presented to the surrounding, pagan populations the first gospel message. **Today, God calls His people to live lives that are distinctively different from others, who do not know Him.** And the principle is the same: **we keep God's laws because we want to please Him; because we appreciate His Son; just because He said so!**

Rather than trying to figure out why God commanded His people to avoid certain foods, clothing, or practices, **we should today center our resolve to be God's observably distinct people in the way we conduct our lives.**

Additional Laws that may not have made "common sense" then....or now

Adultery with an unredeemed slave was punished but not by death (as it might have been, if the woman had not been a slave). The slave may have had no free will in the matter. The guilty man had to publicly bring his guilt (trespass) offering, admitting his guilt and show contrition.

Fruit from fruit trees was not eaten for the first four years in order to enhance its future yield. Was this Jewish environmentalism or simply another example of being a distinct people?

Concerning occult practices, we are to avoid them! These were practiced by the heathen and included the following: eating blood; practicing divination, soothsaying, or consulting the spirit world; cutting the hair from the sides of your head or beard; making cuts in your body for the dead or for tattoos.

We are to revere the aged among us. **1 Timothy 5:1-2** explains that we should not rebuke an old man, but we should appeal to him as a father; and to a older woman as a mother.

Alien residents are not to be treated as "second-class citizens" but are to have the same rights as Jews.

Business practices should always be "kosher" to illustrate before the world that our reliance is on the strength of God who redeemed us from Egypt, rather than deceitful business practices.

Punishment for Violating God's Laws

Chapter 20 details the punishment for a number of deviant sexual practices. If God's people are to be His distinct people, a reflection of Him, and a light to the world, we must abstain from these "abominations." Punishment for some, who flagrantly and defiantly (with a "high hand" or "clenched fist") chose to separate themselves from God through practices considered abominations by Him, is a necessary reflection of His holiness and justice. Punishment for us is a necessary component in our "fear (awesome respect) of God." **But remember it is God who does the punishment (Amos 9:7-15).**

Tucked in with adultery, homosexuality, incest, bestiality, and child sacrifice to heathen gods is verse 9 that admonishes children on pain of death not to curse their parents. Implied in "curses" are not simply angry words but invoking heathen deities and therefore rejecting the God of Israel. God drove out of the land the heathen Canaanites who practiced such things and gave the land they occupied to His people. His desire for His people was that we were...."to keep all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them, so that the land to which I am bringing you to live will not spew you out" (20:22). His desire was/is for His people to publicly show themselves to be His distinct people by what they ate, how they dressed, and in many other aspects of their daily lives. **Even today, God expects His people not to conduct themselves according to the ways of the world but to live lives of purity, as a bride awaiting the coming of the Bridegroom.**

God does not expect us to be perfect people, but he does expect we will be His distinct people. He provided a way of reconciliation for those of His people with proper kavanah (motivation to please God). When we are "convicted" by the Ruach (God's Spirit) that we have deviated from God's way (sinned), we confess and repent. As we are faithful to God in this respect, He is faithful to forgive us. **1st John 1:9** states, "If we

confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

This Shabbat may we renew ourselves in our desire to please God foremost in our everyday lives!

SHABBAT SHALOM