

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation
(Under same management for over 5785 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

April 26th, 10:30AM, Lolo Community Synagogue
12:30PM, Oneg Shabbat & Interactive Torah discussion

"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



Leviticus 9:1- 2

וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי קָרָא מֹשֶׁה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו וּלְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Va-y'hi ba-yom ha-sh'mini kara Moshe l'Aharon ool'vanav ool'ziknei Yisra'el

And it was on the 8th day that Moses called Aaron
and his sons and the elders of Israel.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן

Va-yomer el-Aharon

And he said to Aaron,

קַח-לָךָ עֵגֶל בֶּן-בָּקָר לְחֻטָּאת וְאַיִל לַעֲלֹה תְּמִימִם וְחֶקֶרֶב לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:

kach-lecha egel ben-bakar lechatat v'ayil l'olah tmimim v'hakrev lifney Adonai

"Take yourself a calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering,
[both] unblemished, and offer them before God."



Death of Nadab & Abihu

Leviticus 10: 3

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה |

Vayomer Moshe el-Aharon hu asher-diber Adonai

And Moses said to Aaron "It is what the Lord spoke, saying

לֵאמֹר בִּקְרוּבֵי אֶקְדֹּשׁ וְעַל-פָּנַי כָּל-הָעָם אֲכַבֵּד וַיִּדְּם אַהֲרֹן:

lemor bikrovay ekadesh v'al-peney chol-ha'am ekaved vayidom Aharon.

'By those who come near Me, I will be treated as holy,
and before all the people, I will be honored.' And Aaron held his peace."

Haftarah – 2nd Samuel 6:1,3,4,6,7

Now David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And they placed the ark of God on a new cart that they might bring it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were leading the new cart. So they brought it with the ark of God from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Ahio was walking ahead of the ark. But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it. And the anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.

Psalms 99:8-9

Thou was a forgiving God to them, and yet an avenger of their evil deeds. Exalt the lord our God and worship at His holy hill; for holy is the Lord our God.

B'rit Chadashah – Mark 7:18-23

He (Yeshua) said, "Do you not understand whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated? (Thus He declared all foods clean.) That which proceeds out of the man,

that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the hearts of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."



Aleinu - It is our Duty **Prepared & Ready to Serve God**

The last Torah portion concluded the preparation of the priests to begin their tabernacle service. They underwent a ritual of ordination, according to the specific direction of God that **separated them from all others of God's people to be attentive to God's voice**, to serve Him with all their heart, mind, and strength, and to be an example for all God's people by always walking according to His ways. We learned that **as believer/priests**, we, too, should be prepared and ready to serve God in the way He directs. The priests spent **seven days secluded together** as the final act of their ordination. One thinks about the parallel between the seclusion of the priests before beginning their priestly service and **the seclusion of Messiah in the tomb before resurrection day**. **Each inaugurated the beginning of ministry as High Priest...** one here on earth and one at the right hand of God the Father, as our advocate and High Priest in heaven.

Several years ago, we all dealt with **the effects of seclusion** as the result of the COVID-19 Virus. Some congregational **new ministries** have initiated services and programs on the internet, increasing for service for God both in local communities and throughout the country. While they miss their communal closeness each Shabbat, we have seen that **seclusion can point the way for new perspectives on how we serve God**.



God Authenticates the Priesthood of Aaron

In **Chapter 9**, Moses told Aaron to **begin his ritual service to God with a sin sacrifice for himself**, a burnt sacrifice for the people, along with their grain and peace offerings to God. As the tabernacle priests inaugurated their service with these prescribed **daily sacrifices** ("**olat tamid**") to God, **Aaron lifted up his hands and blessed the people in their faith and obedience to God**. Here we have the first Aaronic

Blessing. From Numbers 6:22-27, God instructed Aaron to bless His people saying, "The Lord bless you, and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance on you and give you peace." God stated that as Aaron invoked God's name upon the people, God would bless them. Then, prepared and ready to serve God, Aaron for the first time accompanied Moses into the tent of meeting and into the presence of God. When Moses and Aaron reappeared before the people and again publicly blessed them, the Shekinah Glory of God appeared to all the people, authenticating the Aaronic Priesthood. And at that moment fire came out from God upon the sacrifice on the altar, as God accepted the prescribed sacrifices already burning, and instantly and totally consumed them. The people were awestruck! They shouted aloud and fell on their faces before the presence of God. Every week as we celebrate Shabbat, we understand that the presence of God is among us. We, too, are awestruck that we are the recipients of the sacrifice of Messiah, whose offering was both prescribed and accepted on our behalf by God. We come before God having accepted for ourselves the sacrifice of the finished work of Messiah, and are prepared & ready to serve God!

Thought Question: When the High Priest Spoke or chanted the Aaronic blessing, who imparted the blessing? Was it God or was it the High Priest? Who imparts the blessing today? God or the Rabbi? If you answered "God" for both questions, then what was the function of the High Priest or today's Rabbi?

To Whom Much is Given, Much is Required

Leviticus, Chapter 10 details the incredible incident involving the oldest two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu. These are the very sons who would be next in line to become High Priest after Aaron. At such a holy time, when they had completed the ritual of ordination over a seven day period, were dressed in their priestly clothes to begin their tabernacle service, and having just witnessed the appearance of God's Shekinah Glory and seen the awesome power of God accepting the prescribed sacrifices, **Nadab and Abihu** took it upon themselves to offer to God **something not prescribed by Him**. They offered "strange fire before the Lord" (esh zarah). "Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and **they died before the Lord**" (10:2), just like the fire that had consumed the prescribed sacrifices. Sin cannot persist in the presence of our Holy God!



Thought Question: Did sin in God's presence actually cause their deaths **or** was this a simple accident? (They "came [too] near [to] Me...")

The Biblical text leaves no doubt that **sin in the presence of God** caused their deaths because **while their bodies were burned by God's fire, their clothes remained in good enough condition to allow their first cousins to carry them....** "still in their tunics to the outside of the camp" (10:5). In Rabbinic literature, there is much speculation as to what was the "strange fire" that caused the death of Aaron's first-born sons. We are not told exactly what it was that they offered. Perhaps they brought coals from the altar of sacrifice, rather than the prescribed incense from the altar of incense (**Ex. 30:35-6; Lev. 16:12**). Perhaps they usurped Aaron's role as High Priest. Some feel that perhaps they entered the holy of holies. (Only the High Priest was allowed to come into God's presence in the Holy of Holies). Because of the accompanying admonition to avoid strong drink while ministering in the tabernacle, some think that Aaron's sons were drunk. So, there is debate as to whether the cause of their deaths was that they attempted to usurp Aaron's role as high priest, offered to God something "not commanded" by Him, ventured into the wrong place, or whether it had to do with their drunken state. Possibly it was a combination of the above: that their drunken state led them to offer the "strange fire" to God. Today we see drunken drivers cause serious accidents or worse and be excused for the serious nature of their offense because they were drunk at the time and therefore "not responsible" for their actions. Some Rabbinic and Christian scholarly discourse asks why God would put to death two of Aarons sons, who might not have even known what they were doing. **The sons of Aaron, Avihu and Nadav, are killed without warning** after making an offering of "strange fire" to God. **Rabbi Samantha Natov** says, "It has puzzled scholars for millennia, but maybe this story is supposed to function similarly to a modern horror film and allow us to ponder the transience of life and possibility of arbitrary violence from a safe distance." **Does our righteous God direct such arbitrary taking of human life? Why were Nadav and Abihu held accountable?**

Thought Questions: Why do you think did God chose to publicly kill two prominent people?

Could it be that the cause of their deaths was a combination of what was offered, who offered it, and their drunken state? In the first two Torah portions of Leviticus, we saw that there were sacrificial and restitutional provisions for every sin. In other words, there was never any excused sin. **All sin separates man from God; therefore each sin must have atonement.** We also observed that the sins atoned for were "unintentional" sins. When the person realized their sin, then they became guilty and brought their sacrifice and/or paid restitution. If a person intentionally sinned (premeditated, defiant sin), intentionally seeking to separate themselves from God, there was no atonement. They became separated from God's people either by fleeing to the Canaanites or by their death. God could not tolerate unrepented sin within His camp. Whatever Nadab and Abihu did to sin before God, it was literally a "sin unto death." **Could it be** that the cause of the public deaths of Aaron's two sons was their public, "high-handed" (intentional) decision to take it upon themselves to offer to God something not prescribed by Him?

Could it be that God could not allow His leaders to publicly defy Him and had to make a public example of them for the benefit of the rest of His leaders to come?

Personally, I think so! **Luke 12:48** tells us that to whom much is given, much is required. **James 3:1** says that teachers receive stricter judgment than others. If this is the case, what an awesome responsibility it is to be a teacher or to lead in worship! Congregational leaders and teachers have the responsibility before God to know and do what God considers right and just! Their responsibility before God for their actions exceeds their elevated position in the eyes of the people. Therefore, God's leaders can never take it upon themselves to do what they wish in defiance of God's commands!

The ultimate high-handed defiance of God is to forsake the sin atonement He provided through the shed blood of the sinless Lamb of God, Messiah, Yeshua. Those who insist on going their own way, separate from the atonement of God, pass into eternity separated from God with their unatoned sin on their head, separated from the holiness of God.

The sin of Nadab and Abihu was most probably unseen by others, which could be why it was unrecorded. Even though we do not know exactly what Nadab and Abihu did when they "offered strange fire" to the Lord, we do know that **their sin was seen by God!** And God provided the consequences for their sin. God also sees our sin, even though it may go unnoticed by others. Should we not also expect God's consequences for our sin?

Thought Question - Present Day Nadab and Abihu?

Within the Levitical, sacrificial system, the prayers of God's people are symbolically likened to incense that rises to God as a satisfying aroma (Psalm 141:2; Revelation 5:8; 8:3). If God's people **obey His voice** and **keep His covenant,** they will be His people, a holy nation, and a kingdom of Priests (Exodus 19:5-6; 1st Peter 2:9;

Revelation 1:6; 5:10). Then it could well be said that we are God's priests on earth, and that our prayers rise to Him as our offering.

In light of the consequences for Nadab and Abihu, who offered "strange fire" to God, **how would God find it if we offered to Him false prayers? Would they be acceptable to Him, or would they be considered as "strange fire"?**

As one example, **would public prayer for something in which one did not believe... just for effect... be considered by God to be "strange fire"?**

For another example, **some may consider the inappropriate use of the gift of tongues to be false prayers.** Many believe that **the gift of tongues in the bible was a real spoken language** with concomitant rules of grammar, syntax, and diction. They would say that it was **not a mere repeating of two or three syllables rapidly or the recitation of gibberish disguised as some ancient "language," so there would be no one available to contradict the veracity of what was said.** Is it possible that many of those who claim to speak in tongues, are not actually speaking a biblical gifting of tongues? In a minority of such cases, could such "language" even be a demonic manifestation? However, **even if such "language" is simply something learned and imitated from being in a circle that teaches this practice, would God consider it an appropriate offering... "strange fire," which He had not commanded?**



Be Holy For I am Holy

Implementing **Leviticus 10:10** to **"make a distinction between the holy and the profane and between the unclean and the clean..."** God instructed Moses and Aaron to **make a distinction between eating animals that are impure ("tamei") and animals that are ritually pure ("tahor").** These "**kosher laws**" began a lifestyle that **would help to hold God's people together as a distinct people over the years.** There would be many other distinctive practices designed to show to the rest of the world that our people are God's people. **They were to eat only certain foods. They were to wear only clothes made of certain materials. They worship only one God in a distinctive way.** There is much commentary concerning the "healthiness" of these Kosher laws; that Kosher animals were the "health foods" of Biblical times. While one can debate the healthiness of eating these foods and only wearing clothes made of certain materials, one cannot debate the fact **that these were commands of God for His people.** **Any animal that chewed its cud and had a split hoof, God's people could eat. Any fish that had fins and scales could be eaten. Of the insects, only those that hopped were allowed.** One could eat from non-porous vessels that could be scrubbed clean and drink from clean cisterns

or from clean, flowing water. However, today there are different Rabbinic distinctions made by different Jewish sects. **Still, we show ourselves to be God's distinct people by obeying His commandments.** Matthew 15:11 tells us that **it is not what enters into the mouth that defiles a man but what proceeds out of the mouth**. Since these kosher laws call us to be God's distinct people, those of us who sometimes exhibit a "sharp tongue" should be admonished to be sure God is in charge of our words for God allows only the "clean" to "draw near." Although the finished, redemptive work of Messiah has made us "clean," we can break fellowship with God by our inappropriate actions. To appropriate His provision for restoration, we must implement 1st John 1:9, **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** Psalms 19:14: **Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."** Let the words and actions of God's redeemed and distinctive people be the "gospel" that points others towards Him!



Kosher Laws

God's People are to be His Distinct People

"This is the law regarding the animal, and the bird, and every living thing that moves in the waters, and everything that swarms on the earth, to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the edible creature and the creature which is not to be eaten" (Lev. 11:46-47).

Permitted animals were those with **both split hooves and that chewed their cud**. Permitted fish were those with **both fins and scales**. Permitted insects were those having jointed legs that hop, rather than swarm. Some Jewish communities over the years have used more scientific methods to determine which animals met these requirements. However, we must remember that the agrarian people of Biblical times would have only utilized empirical evidence to determine which animals, fish, and insects were or were not kosher, according to the Biblical standard. For example, any cloven-hoofed animal that observably appeared to chew its cud (chew its food thoroughly - its mouth moving "to and fro" - would have fulfilled the "chewing their cud" requirement.... no matter how many stomachs it had or whether it would today be considered a ruminant. Some animals that appeared to have these quick mouth movements might have previously been mistakenly considered kosher. Fish like the sturgeon that have bony "scales" have been considered kosher (their caviar was permitted) in earlier times but are not today viewed as kosher. **Swordfish** having fins and (scales that later fall off) were considered kosher by everyone until the respected **Rabbi Tendler**, (who it is

thought wanted to deviate from Conservative Jewish practice) recently indicated that he felt swordfish are not kosher. However, Conservative Jews still find that swordfish remain kosher. Today what is considered kosher may vary according to Rabbinic interpretation. Some carp (in **Gefilte Fish**) have scales and are considered kosher, other carp are not. Some turbot are considered kosher, others are not. The pigfish is kosher. The rock salmon (commercial name for some catfish) is not kosher. Some fish that have "scales" are not considered kosher because of the definition of their "scales" are **marlin, sailfish, and paddlefish**. Grasshoppers, locusts, and crickets fit the Biblical kosher definition of "hoppers," but have been excluded in recent times because Rabbis could not determine whether the ancient names for these insects were the same names as today. Needless to say, there are Rabbis that specialize in Kosher Laws. A good resource is The Kashrus Manual by Shmuel Rubenstein (which I have).

While one could touch and utilize non-kosher animals like **oxen and horses**, they were **not to be used for food or for sacrificial purposes**. However, a dead animal, whether kosher or non-kosher, would render the one who touched it "unclean" until the evening, when after washing himself and his clothes, he was restored. **Secondary uncleanness** befell persons, vessels, clothing, skins, sacks, stoves, etc. upon which a dead animal contaminated. There were procedures for cleansing or destroying contaminated articles.

The "kosher laws" of Leviticus, Chapter 11 can be viewed today as antiquated, restrictive laws that may have had some utilitarian value in ancient days but certainly have out-lived any usefulness for today's world.

Thought Question: Do you think that those who take a **non-strict scriptural position regarding kosher laws** are the same who are consistent in their belief that Scripture emanates from man, rather than being the Word of God? Can you hold the position of keeping the "spirit" of God's kosher laws (for example, separating meat and milk foods; only eating products with Rabbinic kosher certifications). Resource: **Biblically Kosher, a Messianic Jewish Perspective on Kashrut**, by Aaron Eby, published by First Fruits of Zion.

Those of us who believe that God's word remains eternal truth and is efficacious for us today, **look to God's principles underpinning His laws, as profitable for us today**. **God's purpose** in creating laws regarding which foods His people should eat, and which they are to avoid, **was to bind and preserve His people together as His distinct, holy people apart** from all the other people groups of the world. The kosher laws also present a picture of holiness versus defilement.... holiness that allows some to approach God, and defilement that separates others from God. It is only when we become "holy" according to God's protocols that we may come to God in worship and have fellowship with Him. **Before God instituted the tabernacle and Levitical, sacrificial system** to bring man into relationship with Him, God intended all of the bounty of the earth to be food for man: "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. **Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood**" (Genesis 9:3-4). Under the Levitical system, God commanded Moses to..."Speak to the sons of Israel saying, 'These are the creatures

which **you may eat** from all the animals that are on the earth'.... 'Nevertheless, **you are not to eat** of these....' (**Lev. 11:2,4**). Yeshua, Himself, **adhered to these "kosher" laws**. However, Yeshua also taught against regarding the elevation of traditions like the kosher laws above having a correct heart relationship with God. **God's picture of His people as a distinct and holy people is violated, when men believe that simply by keeping the kosher laws, they have obtained righteousness with God.** Yeshua stated, **"Do you not understand whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated? (Thus, He declared all foods clean.)"** That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the hearts of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (**Mark 7:18-23**). Yeshua showed to Peter... **"all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air"....telling him,"Arise, Peter, kill and eat!"** **"What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy"** (**Acts 10:12-13,15**). [Personal note: These animals could have included wild, non-domesticated animals. Therefore, God's command to "kill and eat" could have allowed hunting as the means of killing and eating, as opposed to only the ritual slaughter of domesticated animals.] **Romans, Chapter 14** assumes that Messianic Jews and Gentiles may eat all foods ("**All things indeed are clean**...verse 20). **However, this scripture is really not talking about food but is stating that Gentiles (formerly considered "unclean," "could now become believers in the God of Israel and be considered as "clean," acceptable to God.)** Paul also admonishes us, however,"not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way (vs.13). "All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles" (vs. 20-21). **1st Corinthians 10:31** echoes this as well. Paul states, "Whether, then you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. **Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God**...." Lastly, Timothy excoriates the "hypocrisy of liars, ...who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer" (**1 Timothy 4:2-5**).

Kosher Before God

As was said above, it is only when we become "holy" according to God's protocols that we may come to God in worship and have fellowship with Him. God has always provided His protocol to His people to enable us to "draw near" to Him. However, in ancient times and today, some men have preferred to go **their own way**; to live out **their own lives**, according to **their own standards**. Others have bound themselves to false gods, even to the extent of blowing themselves up for their god in order to kill "infidels." Yet God, even though rejected, is still available to all men.... both Jew and Gentile, who will come to Him on His terms. He demands exclusive worship and obedience to His standards,

which produce in His followers abundant living. He has already provided the means of atonement by which sinful men can come boldly into the presence of our Holy God, just as a child comes into the presence of his father. **So if you want to assure yourself that you are kosher before God, accept the blood sacrifice of the Messiah, Yeshua that God has provided!** You will be given the **Ruach Hakodesh**, the Holy Spirit, which will let you know God's will and help you to serve Him in ways that are pleasing to Him. **Eating and drinking of certain foods and observing certain traditions will become secondary to pleasing God in your everyday lives.**

SHABBAT SHALOM

Important Dates for Israel: April 25th - Holocaust Memorial Day

April 30th - Israel's Day of Remembrance

May 1st, Israel's Independence Day

Our Family in Israel Celebrates Passover

