

## 613 Laws of Torah

### Laws 550 - 599

#### (550)

The kohanim shall not eat the flesh of the sin-offering or guilt-offering outside the Courtyard of the Sanctuary. “You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand. But you must eat them before Yahweh your God in the place which Yahweh your God chooses.” (Deuteronomy 12:17-18) Moses didn’t specifically mention the sin offering (chata’t) or guilt offering (asham) in the cited passage. But okay, at least it’s true that the priests, or kohanim, were supposed to eat these sacrifices, and then only in the place Yahweh would choose. The point, once again, is that Yahshua’s sacrifice—in Jerusalem—would be the only thing that could adequately and permanently deal with our sin and guilt. The asham and chata’t were only temporary and only symbolic.

#### (551)

Do not eat of the flesh of the sacrifices that are holy in a minor degree, before the blood has been sprinkled on the altar. “You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand. But you must eat them before Yahweh your God in the place which Yahweh your God chooses.”

(Deuteronomy 12:17-18) Holy in a minor degree? That’s like being a little bit pregnant. Either something is set apart to Yahweh, or it’s not. That being said, the blood is always dealt with in the context of the slaying of the animal (i.e., before it was eaten), for blood was not to be consumed, so logically, Maimonides is right on that point.

Not to be picky, but the blood for different types of sacrifices was handled in slightly different ways. For the burnt offering (olah) the blood was sprinkled “all around on the altar.” This was the instruction given for the peace offering (selem) as well. Under certain circumstances, the

blood of the sin offering (chata't) was to be sprinkled seven times with the priest's finger in front of the veil before the Most Holy Place, smeared onto the horns of the altar of incense, and the rest was poured out at the base of the altar. (Chata't sacrifices whose blood had been brought into the Tabernacle or Temple were not to be eaten, however. See Leviticus 6:30) For the trespass offering (asham), the blood was sprinkled on the side of the altar, and the remainder was drained out at its base. So the nature of the sacrifice determined how and where the blood was to be ceremonially distributed. Issues involving our homage, thanksgiving, vows, or mistakes were associated with the altar, whose fires speak of judgment, of separation of good from evil. Our sins of behavior, however, must be addressed within the sanctuary, where atonement is made and prayer is offered in the context of the ultimate sacrifice of the Messiah.

**(552)**

The kohein shall not eat the first-fruits before they are set down in the Courtyard of the Sanctuary. "You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand. But you must eat them before Yahweh your God in the place which Yahweh your God chooses." (Deuteronomy 12:17-18) I don't really know why this passage was pressed into service to support the last few mitzvot. Maimonides keeps bringing up issues that aren't raised in the actual text, though they all have something to do with making sacrifices to Yahweh only at the appointed worship location. Here the point of departure is firstfruits, which presumably came to mind because of the text's mention of the heave offering—i.e., the t'rumah. This is a general word meaning "contribution." The word "rum," upon which it's based, means "height," so it's easy to see where the connotation of "lifting up" an offering, a "wave offering," or "heave offering" came from.

The passage that most clearly defines the requirements of the Feast of Firstfruits is Leviticus 23:9-14. The salient portion says: "When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.... You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God." There is no mention of setting anything down in any courtyard. Nor are the priests the only ones who are to partake of the feast. Once again, we find we have to watch the rabbis like a hawk. When they say things that purport to be the Law of God, even if they sound authoritative and reasonable, they aren't necessarily giving us the straight story.

**Caveat emptor.**

**(553)**

Take trouble to bring sacrifices to the Sanctuary from places outside the land of Israel. “The holy things which you have [that is, the thing you have set apart for God’s purpose], and your vowed offerings, you shall take and go to the place which Yahweh chooses. And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the meat and the blood, on the altar of Yahweh your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of Yahweh your God, and you shall eat the meat.” (Deuteronomy

12:26-27) The conditions of the passage at hand are defined by the first sentence of the paragraph: “When Yahweh your God enlarges your border as He has promised you...” which serves to demonstrate that Maimonides is completely wrong here. The whole Temple service was designed to be a workable community endeavor for a small, agriculturally based nation, one whose borders would be enlarged as they were obedient in driving the Canaanites out of the land (borders, by the way, that were defined in excruciating detail in Numbers 34. See Future History, Chapter 6 for more information). Getting scattered to the four winds themselves was not supposed to be part of the plan. Being sent to “places outside the land of Israel” was the result of their continued disobedience and apostasy, as Moses warned them: “Then Yahweh will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone. And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there Yahweh will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul.” (Deuteronomy 28:64-65) This is where Israel is today, for the most part. But Yahweh has begun to bring them back. We have witnessed the budding of the fig tree. Summer can’t be far off.

## **PARSIMONIOUS PRACTICALITY**

**(554)**

Do not eat the flesh of beasts set apart as sacrifices that have been rendered unfit to be offered up by deliberately inflicting blemishes. “You shall not eat any detestable thing.” (Deuteronomy 14:3) Mitzvah #510 said something quite similar, and Maimonides was wrong there, too. In context, Moses is merely defining what animals were okay for food. The passage goes on to say, “These are the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the mountain goat, the antelope, and the mountain sheep. And you may eat every animal with cloven hooves, having the hoof split into two parts, and that chews the cud, among the animals.” (Deuteronomy 14:4-6) Deliberately inflicting blemishes to render an animal unfit for sacrifice is so devious a tactic, it apparently never even occurred to Yahweh to prohibit it. An observation from human nature: it’s my experience that whatever a self-appointed arbiter of public morality rants against is a kissin’ cousin to what he’s personally

guilty of, at least in his heart. People who obsess about being ripped off are usually dishonest themselves. Those who rail against licentiousness are inevitably harboring lustful desires. And there's nothing quite as vehement as the evangelistic zeal of an ex-smoker who's in denial about his cravings. So what does it say about Maimonides when he condemns a legal loophole—twice—that God didn't even mention?

**(555)**

Do not do work with cattle set apart for sacrifice. "All the firstborn males that come from your herd and your flock you shall sanctify to Yahweh your God; you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock." (Deuteronomy 15:19) The instructions concerning the firstborn offering (the bekor), like all Levitical offerings, were designed to impart vital information about the coming Messiah. All "clean" male domestic animals that opened the womb were to be sacrificed:

"You and your household shall eat it before Yahweh your God year by year in the place which Yahweh chooses." (Deuteronomy 15:20) The bekor sacrifice was to be eaten by the worshipper and his family. Although the animal was "sanctified" or dedicated to Yahweh, the advantage—the nourishment, if you will—devolved back upon the one offering the sacrifice. But the firstborn was to benefit the worshipper only through his death. He wasn't to pull a cart, drag a plow, or provide fleece for a loom before his trip to the altar. He had but one purpose—to die so that someone could live. He was to serve as food, nourishment, sustenance—nothing more. Furthermore, the bekor was to be eaten before Yahweh in the place of His choosing, at a time of His appointing—a time of feasting and celebration, one of the three annual national gatherings. In addition, it was specifically designed to be a reminder of the redemption of Israel through the death of the firstborn of Egypt (see Exodus 13).

The question, as usual, is why. Why was the firstborn to provide no service other than dying? I believe it was to teach us not to look upon the Messiah as a supplier of our petty temporal desires. I won't deny that He looks after us as a shepherd tends his sheep, giving us rest in green pastures, leading us beside still waters and restoring our soul (among other things). And yes, if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, He promises to meet our needs in this earth. But in the narrower focus of the Messiah's primary role, we must remember that the job of the Good Shepherd is to lay down His life for His sheep! (John 10:1118) Yahshua didn't come to make His followers prosperous or powerful in this earth. He didn't come to be the founder of a great religion, to be a respected teacher of morals and doctrine, or to show us the way to paradise. He was God's firstborn: He came to die.

**(556)**

Do not shear beasts set apart for sacrifice. “All the firstborn males that come from your herd and your flock you shall sanctify to Yahweh your God; you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock.” (Deuteronomy 15:19) As usual, Maimonides has taken a precept in which Moses has offered two related illustrative examples and made two separate mitzvot out of them. There is only one “law” here, one the Rambam doesn’t remotely comprehend. See Mitzvah #555.

**(557)**

Do not leave any portion of the festival offering brought on the fourteenth of Nissan until the third day.

“...nor shall any of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning.” (Deuteronomy 16:4) I like lamb as much as the next guy, but this is just plain wrong. Maimonides, ignorant of Whom the Passover Lamb represents, has expanded his definition of “leftovers” well beyond the Torah’s explicit instructions. This is a restatement of the Passover instructions originally given in Exodus: “You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire.” (Exodus 12:10) The Passover Lamb was to be killed and roasted whole on the afternoon of the fourteenth day of Nisan, and eaten after sundown (now technically the fifteenth—the Feast of Unleavened Bread) “with unleavened bread and bitter herbs...with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand...in haste.” The Israelites didn’t have the whole day of Nisan 15 to munch leisurely on lamb sandwiches. By morning, they were on their way out of Egypt (see Exodus 12:29-36), the anguished wails of the lost world ringing in their ears.

I don’t know—maybe Maimonides did realize Who the Passover Lamb represented, and just didn’t want his audience to make the connection. Yahshua of Nazareth had been slain on the afternoon of Passover, 31AD, His blood smeared on the upright post (Greek stauros, errantly translated “cross”) keeping the angel of death at bay for all mankind, if only we’ll embrace the protection it provides. On the Feast of Unleavened Bread—beginning at sundown—His body lay in the tomb while His soul endured the fires of judgment for us, removing all of the leaven—the sin—from our lives. And now, at the breaking of the new day, we like the Israelites of old are free to leave Egypt—to flee the bondage of the world.

But Maimonides would have you hesitate, enjoy the perks of your slavery for one more day, and prevent the Lamb of God from enduring the consuming fire of judgment on your behalf. After all, Pharaoh has given you his solemn word. You’re free to go, he says. He wouldn’t change his mind, would he?

**(558)**

Do not offer up a beast that has a temporary blemish. “You shall not sacrifice to Yahweh your God a bull or sheep which has any blemish or defect, for that is an abomination to Yahweh your God.” (Deuteronomy 17:1) There is nothing mentioned in the text about a disqualifying blemish being “temporary.” If anything, the words are stronger than they’ve been translated: “to have a blemish” is literally “to be an evil thing.” “Defect” is derived from the Hebrew *dabar ra*, meaning “a statement, word, or message that is bad, wicked, malignant, or worse than others of its kind.” This all conspires to make Maimonides’ interpretation completely wrong. The idea is that even if the animal isn’t visibly marked or blemished in some way but is nevertheless the “bottom of the barrel,” a poor specimen of its breed, then don’t foist it off on Yahweh as an offering as if you’re doing Him some kind of favor. He sent His own Son to die for our sins—a perfect sacrifice if ever there was one. The least we could do is offer up the very best animal we could find within our flocks and herds in emulation of His provision.

This whole discussion applies to other areas of our life as well (since, let’s face it, nobody is making Levitical sacrifices at the temple these days). Do we put in our best effort at work, or just do enough to avoid being fired for laziness and insubordination? Do we study to learn a subject, or merely to pass the quiz? Does our charity consist of giving the needy what they need, or merely what we don’t want any more? Forget WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?). Think about WDYD (What Did Yahweh Do?) He is the God of the Hallmark card (if you’ll pardon the stupid expression): He cared enough to send the Very Best.

**(559)**

Do not bring sacrifices out of the hire of a harlot or price of a dog. (apparently a euphemism for sodomy). “You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of Yahweh your

God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to Yahweh your God.”

(Deuteronomy 23:18) There is more to the epithets “harlot” and “dog” than merely sexual sin. Remember the Fifth Commandment? “Honor your Father and your Mother, that your days may be long upon the land which Yahweh your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12) I’ve capitalized “Father” and “Mother” because ultimately, our parents are merely a metaphor for God Himself—Yahweh as our Father and His Spirit dwelling within us as our Mother. Their love is what gave us existence and life. Yahweh designed us to function as families in order to teach us what He is like! And that is why Satan works so hard to dismantle families—he doesn’t want us to know, for if we did, we would understand what Yahweh has done for us.

Satan's war on the family has many fronts: separating husbands from their wives, separating children from their parents, separating sex from marriage, blurring gender roles, and so forth. At the time of the exodus, Satan was openly worshipped in Canaan as Ba'al, Chemosh, Molech, and Dagon, among others, and in the temples dedicated to these false gods, temple prostitution—both male and female—was an essential rite, a clever attempt by Satan to obfuscate God's pattern of familial love, faithfulness, and purpose. The harlot here was a female temple prostitute whose job it was to destroy the family, and the "dog" her male counterpart, whether homosexual or not. In the precept at hand,

Yahweh was warning His people not to adopt the ways of the people they were tasked to dispossess. Their worship practices were the very antithesis of His revealed character—an abomination in His eyes.

**(560)**

Read the portion prescribed on bringing the first fruits. "And it shall be, when you come into the land which Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that Yahweh your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where Yahweh your God chooses to make His name abide. And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, 'I declare today to Yahweh your God that I have come to the country which Yahweh swore to our fathers to give us.' Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of Yahweh your God. And you shall answer and say before Yahweh your God: 'My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. Then we cried out to Yahweh, God of our fathers, and Yahweh heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. So Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, Yahweh, have given me.'"

(Deuteronomy 26:1-10) The Israelites were instructed to recount the history of their nation upon the presentation of the firstfruits. This would take place on the Feast of Firstfruits on the day after the weekly Sabbath during the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the sanctuary. The first instance of this is recorded in Joshua 5:10-12.

Yahweh, of course, wasn't interested in "vain repetition," in hearing thousands of Jews mindlessly mumble through a formula recitation once a year. He wanted them to think about

what He had done for them—both in temporal and spiritual terms. Let's take the time to explore the prescribed confession. It begins, "I have come to the country which Yahweh swore to our fathers to give us." We are to realize that our position of fellowship with God (the "country" in which we live) is the result of Yahweh keeping His promises. "My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous." There's more to "Syrian, about to perish" than meets the eye. In Hebrew, it's 'abad 'Arammiy—an Aramean

(which in turn means "exalted") who is lost, strayed, vanishing, or dying. ("Abram," by the way, means "exalted father," while "Abraham" means "father of many.") In other words, Abram our father was exalted by Yahweh when he was a lost, perishing soul—which reminds us of what Paul said: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Egypt represents the world, a place of slavery and sin: "But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us."

Recognizing we're in trouble is an essential step in getting help. "Then we cried out to Yahweh, God of our fathers, and Yahweh heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression." It does no good to appeal to Pharaoh, and even less to cry out to his false gods—they're the ones who are trying to keep us in affliction, labor, and oppression. Only Yahweh can help us in our plight, for only He both loves us and has the power to save us. "So Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders." We can't get out of Egypt by our own strength. The word translated "terror" here is *mowra*, an awe-inspiring exhibition of power, an equally appropriate description for the ten plagues of Egypt and the resurrection of the crucified Messiah from the dead. And as I observed in my study of end times prophecy, Future History, these same signs and wonders will be repeated in the last days as Yahweh separates His people from the world that enslaves them. We can expect to see the reprise of all ten plagues as well as the return of the Messiah in glory—another "awe-inspiring exhibition of power" on the part of Yahweh. The objective of this second exodus will be the same as the first: "He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey." Once again, the promised land represents our final destination in the presence and fellowship of God—something only He can achieve for us, and that only through His "mighty hand" and "outstretched arm."

And how are we to respond to all this? The last words of the recitation tell us: "And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, Yahweh, have given me." If the "land" is our position in the grace of God, then what is the crop? Is it not the peace, the security, the fellowship, and the joy of our salvation? And is it not the temporal gifts we've received as well as the spiritual blessings? What are we to do with the firstfruits? Share them, bring them to the priests—your fellow believers—who are to offer them up in homage and thanksgiving to God.



Remember, we're talking about firstfruits here: the harvest is yet to come. What we receive in this life is but a small sample of what we can expect to reap in eternity future. But our faithfulness and obedience concerning the things we receive now will be reflected in the magnitude of the harvest.

### Ritual Purity

It's becoming clear that the Law of Moses ranges from the mostly symbolic (circumcision, the burnt offering, and the Sabbath, for instance) to the mostly practical (such as restitution for theft, removing pigs, rats, and carrion birds from the menu, and not marrying your sister). Most of these precepts fall somewhere in between: part practical advice, part metaphors of some greater truth.

The subject of ritual purity falls within this "hybrid" category. The things that are defined as ceremonially defiling often have a basis in hygiene. Thus separating people who are "defiled" or "unclean" from the general population or barring them from certain activities is only prudent from a community health-care perspective. On the other hand, Yahweh has invariably couched the process by which one may return to a "clean" or "undefiled" state in terms of ritualistic law, fraught with symbolic significance. Only through the performance of certain rites may one regain his "undefiled" status in the commonwealth of Israel.

But it has also become increasingly obvious that religion (for its own sake) is something Yahweh detests. He is not the least bit interested in seeing us follow the rules just because there are rules to follow. Rather, He wants us to know Him, to understand what He is doing for us, and why. You can almost hear the agony in His voice as He speaks through the prophet Hosea: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me. Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.... I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." (Hosea 4:6, 6:6) The word translated

"knowledge" here is da'at, meaning perception, discernment, knowledge, understanding, skill, or wisdom. The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament explains that "da'at is derived from the root verb yada, 'to know' [in a relational sense]. The root expresses knowledge gained in various ways by the senses.... Da'at is a general term for knowledge, particularly that which is of a personal experiential nature... it is the contemplative perception of the wise man... also used of moral cognition."

Note that God doesn't say His people are destroyed by bad behavior, failure to keep every nuance of the Law, or even idolatry. These things are merely by products of the real problem —

a lack of knowledge concerning their God. But it's not as if they hadn't been taught: Israel had rejected knowledge, forsaken it, and finally exchanged it for a list of 613 silly rules and pointless regulations. When Yahweh says, "You have forgotten the law of your God," He's pointing out the place from which the knowledge His people lack was supposed to come—the Law. I know it sounds like we're going in circles here, but we're not. The only logical answer to the conundrum is that the "knowledge of God" that Israel was supposed to receive from the Law was latent in the symbols and metaphors that were written between every line of the Torah, the symbols that are becoming so evident in this present study. If the olah isn't symbolic of something important (the sacrifice of the Messiah), all you've got is smoke and ash and one less sheep in your flock. If the Sabbath isn't a metaphor for a greater reality (the conclusion of Yahweh's 7,000-year plan for the redemption of mankind), all you've got is a day off once a week—and God's irrational promise to destroy you if you don't take advantage of it. And if circumcision isn't representative of some significant element in Yahweh's agenda (the separation of man from his sin), then all you've got is the painful, bloody—and pointless—mutilation of the most sensitive part of a guy's anatomy.

Paul chose circumcision as the issue he'd use to demonstrate the difference between mindlessly performing the outward rituals of the Law in an attempt to impress God and the alternative—coming to a knowledge of Yahweh. His case rests upon the recognition of Yahshua the Messiah as the ultimate object of all those symbols and metaphors that permeate the Torah. "Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ cannot help you." In other words, you must choose between them—you can't travel on two paths at one time. "I'll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey all of the regulations in the whole law of Moses. For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace...." We recognize the act of circumcision as symbolic of sin being "cut off" from mankind. But Paul is pointing out something quite significant about the symbol here: if your reliance is on circumcision (and on keeping the rest of the Law), then you've identified yourself with the part that's being cut off and thrown away, not the part God wants to keep! (The NIV words it "alienated from Christ," and the NASB renders it "severed.") I'm not sure, but I think Paul just called those who rely on the Law "dickheads." Pardon my Greek.

"But we who live by the Spirit [in contrast with those who rely on the Law] eagerly wait to receive everything promised to us who are right with God through faith. For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, it makes no difference to God whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love." (Galatians 5:2-6 NLT) If circumcision means

something, then that which it means—our separation from our sin—is the reality, and the rite itself is but the shadow. And if that reality has been manifested for us through the sacrifice of Yahshua, then the shadow is no longer significant. Put another way, if circumcision is a sign pointing toward our separation from sin, then our arrival at that destination makes the road sign superfluous. The sign was once important. Now it's redundant.

“You were getting along so well. Who has interfered with you to hold you back from following the truth? It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. But it takes only one wrong person among you to infect all the others—a little yeast spreads quickly through the whole batch of dough! I am trusting the Lord to bring you back to believing as I do about these things. God will judge that person, whoever it is, who has been troubling and confusing you.” (Galatians 5:7-10 NLT) I should pause to make something clear. The “Judaizers” whom Paul is castigating here were not rabbis who denied the deity or Messiahship of Yahshua. They were, rather, “Christians” (in the nominal sense of the word) who held that the Torah must still be followed even though Yahshua had fulfilled it to the letter and bought our salvation with His blood. It is my sad duty to report that these guys are still around, camping on the fringes of the “Messianic” movement. Some of them are brilliant scholars; and they'd have to be brilliant in order to perform the intense mental juggling act that's essential to their doctrine. Paul says, literally, that “he who troubles you will bear his judgment.” That word “judgment” is *krima*, meaning a judicial decision, a decree—usually, though not always, implying a negative verdict, a condemnation.

First, they must convince us that the “Law” of which Paul speaks is not the Torah, but rather the “oral law,” a collection of traditions and rulings that have (the rabbis insist) existed side by side with the written Torah since the time of Moses. (In point of fact, the oral law was invented by the Jewish exiles in Babylon, maybe twelve hundred years later.) The Talmud and Mishnah were later developments, written versions of the oral law (confused yet?) upon which our friend Maimonides based his work. In other words, the 613 mitzvot we've been reviewing are in reality based not on the Torah but on the Talmud, a fact that explains some of the Rambam's confusion. (My commentary, on the other hand, is based on the written Torah.) The bottom line? Believers (they say) are still required to observe the Torah in all its detail, whether or not it's possible, whether or not anybody has ever succeeded in doing so. They're just not required to keep the “oral law,” something that in Paul's day was as nebulous and contradictory as any man-made religion has ever been.

Unfortunately for the neoJudaizers (and fortunately for us), there isn't a shred of evidence to support their theory. When Paul speaks of circumcision, he's referring to the rite commanded in the Torah, not a “secondary circumcision” demanded by the rabbis. (Much of the really dumb

stuff in Judaism wasn't invented until after rabbi Akiba made eisegesis—reading doctrine into a passage instead of extracting truth out of it—a contact sport in the Jewish religion early in the second century.)

To make their argument sound plausible, the neoJudaizers must toss another ball into the air.

Since there is no earthly reason gentile believers would be inclined to heed Jewish rabbis (especially when they contradicted the written Scriptures), it is hypothesized that all of the Galatian believers were actually members of the “ten lost tribes” of Israel. Further, every “gentile” believer ever since is actually a biological descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—a hitherto unidentified member of these lost tribes. This is the basic thrust of the so-called “two-house” movement. Again, it betrays a fundamental lack of understanding as to what the Torah was meant to achieve in God's plan, and what the role of the Jews (or more correctly, Israel) was supposed to be. Salvation is not for the Jews (not exclusively, anyway). It's of the Jews.

Thus it is that a third ball gets tossed into the air. The neoJudaizers insist that because Paul only sought out and taught Israelite expatriates (not actual gentiles), none of the New Covenant Scriptures were composed in Greek, but were written in Aramaic, a close cognate of

Hebrew. This leaves them free to re-translate the Greek texts into Aramaic (or use existing Aramaic versions) and then translate those into English, leaving them lots of linguistic wiggle room in which to advance their agenda. I'll agree that the book of Hebrews and the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John could well have been originally penned in Aramaic or Hebrew. This might explain why the polished Greek of the Gospel of John is somewhat different from the rough language of Revelation: John wrote the latter in his second language, not his mother tongue. But the idea that Paul wasn't fluent in Greek or didn't write in Greek to audiences outside of Judea is patently absurd. Paul hailed from Tarsus, in what is now Southern Turkey.

He was a Roman citizen. Greek was the lingua franca of the day, much as English is today. Outside of Judea, his only language options would have been Greek and Latin—even to Jewish audiences.

So Paul makes his case: “Dear brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised—as some say I do—why would the Jews persecute me? The fact that I am still being persecuted proves that I am still preaching salvation through the cross of Christ alone. I only wish that those troublemakers who want to mutilate you by circumcision would mutilate

themselves.” (Galatians 5:11-12 NLT) Paul sounds miffed, doesn't he? I guess he's got good reason. The advocates of “Law plus Grace” would never have persecuted Paul to the extent they did if he had spoken only against the oral law while upholding the necessity of flawlessly keeping the Instructions of Moses. The word translated “mutilate” (apokopto) generally means “to cut off, to amputate.” Many commentators feel that Paul actually intends to suggest emasculation, castration, sort of a circumcision gone horribly wrong. The point is that he doesn't wish to see these heresies bear any fruit among the faithful.

He continues: “For you have been called to live in freedom—not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.” (Galatians 5:13-15 NLT) As Paul and I have both said 'til we're blue in the face, we're not suggesting that the Law of Moses has no value and should be discarded as a guidebook to life, our “Owner's Manual,” to coin a phrase. It has always—and will always—have inestimable value in revealing the mind of God to mortal man. And what is Yahweh's mindset toward us? What does He want us to do? Only to love Him with our whole being and to love our fellow man. If love is what we're all about, the precepts of the Law will become more or less automatic for us. Of course, “Love your neighbor as yourself” is no easier to do in the strength of our flesh than is any other precept in the Torah.

“So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves,” which is: loving yourself at the expense of your neighbor. “The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject to the law.” It isn't that we're above the Law, but rather that the Holy

Spirit directs us to conduct our lives in a manner that's compatible with it, which makes sense, since Yahweh is the Author of both the Law and the Spirit's counsel. Our sinful nature struggles against both of these things. Which impulse will prevail, our sinful nature or the direction of the Holy Spirit? Good question, but first note that Paul is talking to believers here, for whom both things are a potential influence. Those without God's Spirit dwelling within them have only their sinful natures to shape their behavior (which goes a long way toward explaining why the Law is impossible to keep).

But for us, both things, like a couple of hungry dogs, vie for our favors, fighting among themselves.

Which one wins?

Which one gets stronger over time? The one we feed.

“When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:16-21 NLT) Is Paul saying that if a believer ever has a lustful thought or a twinge of envy he’s not really saved? No. He’s saying that if these things—as a collective profile—describe your life, it’s evidence that you are “following the desires of your sinful nature,” presumably because the Holy Spirit is absent, exerting no influence at all in your life. A key phrase is “anyone living that sort of life,” or as the NKJV puts it, “those who practice such things.” But the word translated “living” or “practice” is *anapraso*, the very term Paul used to describe his own frustrating failures in Romans 7. It is therefore clear that it is the totality of one’s moral attitude, not the occasional lapse in behavior, that identifies one’s spiritual position. But don’t let the tail wag the dog here: trying your best to avoid the things on this list won’t “save” you any more than trying to keep the Law of Moses will.

If we’re really believers, however, we’ll have two dogs in this fight (so to speak). “But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.” Not in the Torah, anyway. As we have seen, there is a subtle undercurrent of self-centered, joyless, unforgiving harshness in the oral law upon which Maimonides’ *mitzvot* are based. “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there....” Note that Paul didn’t declare that “the Law has been nailed to the cross,” as is so often preached these days. What’s been crucified is the influence of the flesh with its “passions and desires,” not the Torah, the part of God’s Word that merely points out where we’ve erred.

Having identified what characterizes a Spirit-led life and how it differs from one dominated by the sin nature, Paul now offers some practical advice. “If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another.” (Galatians 5:22-26 NLT) Once again, it comes down to a choice we’ve been given. We can choose to follow one influence or the other,

the Spirit's leading or our old sinful nature. Paul's admonition identifies certain pitfalls that all too readily entrap Christians: sanctimonious pride, a prickly, provocative, confrontational attitude, and the envy of those who are even more arrogant and irritating (i.e., more "religious") than we are—ecclesiastical ambition. But at least we have a choice of how to behave. Those without Christ are never even "tempted" to live godly lives, though they may find that other people like them better if they're kind, patient, gentle, and self-controlled. A far more fundamental choice must be made before real godliness is possible—the choice of whose family to enter.

## **IMPURITY THROUGH CONTACT**

### **(561)**

Eight species of creeping things defile by contact. "These also shall be unclean to you among the creeping things that creep on the earth: the mole, the mouse, and the large lizard after its kind; the gecko, the monitor lizard, the sand reptile, the sand lizard, and the chameleon. These are unclean to you among all that creep. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening.

" (Leviticus 11:29-31) No there aren't, and no they don't. Some days you just want to take

Maimonides and throttle him. It seems as though every time we turn around he's finding new ways to get it wrong.

Leviticus 11 is all about dietary guidelines. We covered much of it in detail back in chapter 5 of this book. By the time we get to these few verses, we've learned that (1) it's only okay to eat land animals that have divided hooves and chew their cud, (2) only sea creatures that have fins and scales (in other words, true fish) are good for food, (3) "barnyard" birds are okay to eat, but carrion birds and predators are not, (4) the only insects that may be eaten are locusts and related species, and (5) we aren't to eat anything that walks around on its paws. The eight animals listed in the passage at hand merely clarify the list of forbidden foods: rodents and reptiles are out. The list doesn't pretend to be comprehensive, any more than the list of forbidden birds was. These are just familiar examples of the types of animals that we aren't to eat.

And what about "defiling by contact?" As far as the Torah is concerned, this is only true of touching the unclean animal's carcass. They don't ceremonially defile anyone if they're alive. You can pet your cat; you just can't eat him. "By these you shall become unclean; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until evening; whoever carries part of the carcass of any of them shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening: the carcass of any

animal which divides the foot, but is not cloven-hoofed or does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. Everyone who touches it shall be unclean. And whatever goes on its paws, among all kinds of animals that go on all fours, those are unclean to you. Whoever touches any such carcass shall be unclean until evening. Whoever carries any such carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. It is unclean to you.” (Leviticus 11:24-28) Life never defiles. Nor does anything that Yahweh has declared to be clean defile someone on contact, sometimes even if it is no longer alive. (If you’re going to eat a steak, it’s axiomatic that the cow is kaput.) Only things that are both dead and unclean defile you by merely touching them.

Spiritually speaking, the lesson is clear: the world is unclean, but we must walk through it on life’s journey. Left to its own devices, it is usually spiritually neutral, neither harmful nor beneficial to us. We are instructed not to “ingest” the things of the world, not to assimilate them into our being, not to love them. But there are things within the world—notably dead religious practice, arrogance, greed, and lust for power—that are not only unclean, they’re also dead. That is, they are not spiritually neutral, but are enemies of God and His people, warring actively against them. These are things we are not even to touch!

## **(562)**

Foods become defiled by contact with unclean things. “Anything on which any of them [i.e., the carcass of an unclean animal] falls when they are dead shall be unclean, whether it is any item of wood or clothing or skin or sack, whatever item it is in which any work is done, it must be put in water. And it shall be unclean until evening; then it shall be clean. Any earthen vessel into which any of them falls you shall break; and whatever is in it shall be unclean: in such a vessel, any edible food upon which water falls becomes unclean, and any drink that may be drunk from it becomes unclean. And everything on which a part of any such carcass falls shall be unclean; whether it is an oven or cooking stove, it shall be broken down; for they are unclean, and shall be unclean to you.” (Leviticus 11:32-35) Yes, if a dead fly falls into your lemonade, the lemonade has become defiled, unclean. But so has the glass. Depending upon whether it can be properly washed, the contaminated vessel is to be either cleansed in water or destroyed. (I get the feeling that while an unglazed, unfired clay pot would have to be destroyed, one hardened in the fire of the kiln could be washed and reused.) There are obvious hygiene considerations, but the steps that Yahweh specified one must go through to regain the status of being ritually pure have meaning far beyond these practical health reasons.

We need to address what it meant to be “ritually defiled,” or “ceremonially unclean.” The Hebrew adjective tame is apparently derived from the noun describing alluvial mud, or the related verb meaning “to flow over,” a graphic description of what happens to us as we walk through this



world—without even trying, we get inundated by the filth of our environment from time to time. With its derivatives, tame is used in scripture 279 times (two thirds of them in the Torah), making it a concept ubiquitous in God's Law. While becoming tame was obviously supposed to be avoided if possible, it was equally clear that it would be inevitable from time to time. As long as we're mortals, the risk of "defilement" is always present.

Although tame is translated with such evil sounding words as "unclean," "defiled," and "impure," it's not precisely the same thing as sin, which is technically "missing the mark." It is a statement of condition, not of behavior. If you'll recall in our discussion of the Levitical sacrifices (Chapter 12), God drew a distinction between offerings for sin (chata't) and "mistakes" or trespasses (asham). But there is no sacrifice to cover becoming tame/defiled. Cleansing is available (by washing in water and letting time pass), but forgiveness is deemed unnecessary and inappropriate. There are, however, consequences for having become defiled. It temporarily disqualified a priest or Levite from performing his usual service at the sanctuary, and it separated the ordinary Israelite from fellowship and participation in the life of his community, most notably prohibiting him from approaching Yahweh in worship. That's why we refer to these things as "ritually" or "ceremonially" defiling, even though the words aren't there in the Hebrew. In this life, becoming tame is a condition that by definition is (or can be) accidental, unavoidable, inadvertent—even inevitable.

Although tame isn't "sin" per se, it can serve as a picture of our sin, that is, our fallen state or condition. It points out that in addition to requiring atonement through sacrifice, we also need to be cleansed. Ezekiel in particular uses the metaphor of ritual defilement to describe an idolatrous Israel. That makes the cleansing process—the washing in water and the passage of time—especially significant for Israel. You see, another ubiquitous scriptural metaphor pictures Israel as the "land," while the gentile nations are called the "sea." So it is that an unrepentant Israel has been "immersed" in the gentile nations for the better part of two thousand years, enduring a cleansing process that will only be complete when her Messiah returns to close the book on the times of the gentiles—at the definitive Day of Atonement, coming soon to a world near you.

### **(563)**

Anyone who touches the carcass of a beast that died of itself shall be unclean. "And if any animal which you may eat dies, he who touches its carcass shall be unclean until evening. He who eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. He also who carries its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. (Leviticus 11:39-40) The issue here is how a clean animal has died. If a man butchered a sheep or cow for food, or if it was

slaughtered as a sacrifice according to the instructions of the Torah (draining the blood, etc.), then he would not be defiled by handling the carcass. However, if one of his cattle dropped dead and he had to dispose of its corpse, he would be “unclean” under the Law. As we saw in Mitzvah #156, a clean animal who died of its own accord could be sold to the neighboring gentiles as food, but the Israelite, having been set apart to Yahweh, was not to eat of it. Here we see that if he did eat some of it, it would ritually defile him.

If we look hard enough for them, we can perceive the life-lessons that are latent here. The death of a clean animal (i.e., one suitable for sacrifice) can be a good thing or not, depending upon how it died. It either provides us with nourishment and satisfaction or it's a meaningless waste of living resources. God, I believe, is trying to make us understand that our intimate contact with the dead things of this world separates us from Him and His people, if only temporarily. It makes us useless in His service and too filthy to be of any benefit to our fellow man. Worse, this condition of uncleanness is exacerbated if we attempt to “nourish” ourselves with the lifeless distractions we see around us. In point of fact, the only “good” death—i.e., the only death from which we can legitimately derive benefit—is that purposely suffered by something “clean,” for that death is a reflection of the sacrifice of the Messiah on our behalf, a death that (like the properly slaughtered cow or sheep) actually brings life in its wake—the innocent meeting the needs of the guilty.

#### **(564)**

A lying-in woman is unclean like a menstruating woman (in terms of uncleanness). “If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. She shall then continue in the blood of her purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her customary impurity, and she shall continue in the blood of her purification sixty-six days.” (Leviticus 12:2-5) We discussed this passage under Mitzvah #501, where the subject was what offerings the new mom was to bring. Here we are given the details of her period of ritual impurity—forty days total (seven plus thirty-three) if she had borne a son, and twice that long if the child was a daughter.

Indulge me for a moment while I chase a rabbit. Could it be significant that the number of days of a woman's purification precisely matches the number of years of King David's reign? I Kings 2:11 reports that David, “a man after God's own heart,” reigned in Hebron seven years, and then in Jerusalem for thirty-three. The character of his reign, then, is defined by where he lived.

Both the numbers and place names are significant. Hebron means “association” or “alliance,” from the verb *habar*, meaning “to join or unite.” Seven is the ubiquitous number indicating divine completion, so David’s Hebron sojourn—as well as the woman’s first portion of her post-partum cleansing, if my observations have merit—is indicative of a perfect, complete alliance with Yahweh.

Jerusalem is a bit harder to pin down. The name has two components. The first might be *yarah*, a primitive root verb meaning “to throw, shoot, cast, or pour,” leading to two derivative concepts, to teach or instruct, and to “throw water,” i.e. rain. On the other hand, if *yerussa* is the origin of “Jeru...” then “possession” or “inheritance” is meant. If it’s *yira*, it means, “to see.” The second component is *shalam*—restitution, recompense, reward, payment, or amends, and thus by implication, peace). So Strong’s says Jerusalem means “teaching of peace.” The Open Bible suggests it’s “Possession of Peace.” Baker and Carpenter and others call it “Foundation of Peace.” I’ve also heard it called the “City of Peace,” “Secure Habitation,” “To See Peace,” and the place from which “Redemption Flows” or from which “Restitution Pours.” I have the feeling that it really means “all of the above,” for all these things describe the city as it is in God’s view. The city of Jerusalem has no earthly significance outside of what Yahshua accomplished there. So what’s the importance of thirty-three? Not coincidentally, this is precisely the number of years Yahshua walked the earth as the Son of Man (from the fall of 3 B.C. to the spring of 31 A.D.).

This is turning out to be a tangled skein but one worth unraveling. The woman represents the human race (or at least the portion of it indwelt with the Holy Spirit), and her husband is symbolic of Yahweh. The son born to her is figurative of Yahshua—the union of God and humanity. The birth of a woman’s son was the direct result of her “association or alliance,” her joining (*habar*/Hebron) with her husband. The first seven days of her purification reflect this perfect unity of God with humanity—the life of Christ. Only after this period is her son circumcised (which, you’ll recall, is symbolic of the removal of our sin, which became historical fact after—and as a result of—Yahshua’s sacrifice, His being “cut off”). The day of circumcision thus begins her final thirty-three day period of purification, during which (using “Jerusalem” as our key) her son (named “Yahweh is Salvation”) becomes her “inheritance,” her “possession,” (or alternately, her teacher or the One who pours salvation upon her) through whom she would be at peace with God—a peace attained through *shalam*: restitution, recompense, the making of amends. And since the name “David” means “love,” this final purification period, symbolized by Jerusalem, is “the place where Love lives.” Thus the final thirty-three days represent our mortal life in Christ, just as the first seven prophesied Christ’s mortal life among us. We are to walk through this life in the reality of His atonement and in the light of His love.

Either that, or Moses was just making this stuff up as he went along, and I'm seeing things that aren't really there. I'll let you decide.

## **THE THINGS THAT DEFILE US**

**(565)**

A leper is unclean and defiles. "When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes on the skin of his body like a leprous sore, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. The priest shall examine the sore on the skin of the body; and if the hair on the sore has turned white, and the sore appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous sore. Then the priest shall examine him, and pronounce him unclean." (Leviticus 13:2-3) Moses goes on for the next forty-plus verses describing the visual criteria the priest was to use for determining whether a blemish that appeared on the skin was "a leprous sore." From the description, it is clear that far more than clinical leprosy—Elephantiasis graecorum, a.k.a. Hansen's Disease—is included in the biblical "leprosy." The Hebrew word sara'at refers to a wide range of malignant (and more to the point, potentially contagious) skin diseases, but the catch-all terms "leprosy," "leprous," and "leper" serve as convenient designations for all these various conditions.

As we have come to expect, there is more to the "law of leprosy" than merely preventing physical disease from spreading. The picture is that of preventing spiritual sickness from proliferating. Let's begin by identifying the players, in symbolic terms. Aaron plays the role of Yahshua, our ultimate High Priest. His "sons" are believers who have been given access to the throne of grace through Christ's sacrifice. Israel here represents humanity at large—we who have been created and invited to reciprocate Yahweh's love. And the "leprous sore" is anything that is not consistent with God's perfect plan for mankind—estrangement, falsehood, heresy, idolatry, error—of which there are many varieties (no fewer than a dozen different skin maladies are listed in the first 46 verses of Leviticus 13).

If we examine the oft-repeated verbs in this passage that apply to what the priests are supposed to be doing, we discover a stunning truth, one that is very unpopular in today's politically correct landscape: Believers are to be more than discerning; we are instructed to be judgmental and intolerant of falsehood. We are not supposed to be forgiving, broadminded, and lenient where the truth of God's word is concerned, though we are to forgive the moral lapses of our fellow man, graciously pardoning their personal attacks against us. The difference is important. But if a doctrine or principle is wrong—any kind of wrong—then it must be identified and dealt with.

The numbers tell the tale. First, at least twenty-five times in this passage the priests are instructed to look, see, examine, or otherwise consider the blemish in question. We are not to close our eyes to the falsehood around us; rather, we are instructed to look for it, recognize it for what it is, and identify it. Whatever the politicians, pundits, and preachers are saying is to be examined and compared with what we know to be true—the Word of God. And that includes the things I'm telling you.

Second, we are told seven times to “isolate” the suspected carrier of the disease. The priest was instructed to keep the person (i.e., his suspected sickness) set apart from the general population until it could be determined precisely what the blemish really was—a dangerous malignancy or a harmless freckle. In spiritual terms, we are being warned to exercise caution—to make a thorough examination of any idea or teaching before we accept it as truth or reject it as falsehood. We are to take time performing the “due diligence” that’s required to get to the truth. (The Berean Ekklesia was commended in Acts 17:11 for doing precisely that—checking what Paul had told them against the authority of the Scriptures.) Our failure to heed this principle has allowed many destructive heresies to creep into the practice of our faith, turning what should have been a simple relationship with our heavenly Father into a tradition encrusted religion. And conversely, in our haste to condemn anything that doesn’t mesh with our religious traditions (as opposed to what God’s Word actually teaches), our failure to “isolate” and calmly examine less-than-obvious scriptural truths has marginalized them and robbed many of us of their edification and blessing. (Examples: Yahweh’s ubiquitous six-plus one pattern; the prophetic significance of His seven appointed gatherings, the “Feasts” of Yahweh; the benefits that naturally result from adherence to the Torah’s precepts; and the divergent roles Yahweh has assigned to biological Israel and the Ekklesia, the so-called “Church.”)

Third, the believer-priests were told seventeen times in this passage to “pronounce” the subject either clean or unclean, based upon the findings revealed by their “looking” and “isolating.” We are not to keep our mouths shut for fear of offending someone, being impolite, or trampling upon their “rights.” Rather, we are to shine the bright light of God’s truth upon the matter, no matter how out of step with society we are—even if it’s our own “Christian” society.

Believers today have been told that it would be somehow “unloving” to confront Muslims or Hindus, atheistic secular humanists, or even apostate “Christians” with the error of their beliefs. But in point of fact, all we’re doing by remaining silent is encouraging them to walk around with a contagious, deadly disease that promises to kill not only them but anyone with which they come in contact. Where’s the love in that? If your child starts to chase a ball into a busy street, you scream and run after them. Why? Because you love them and don’t want them to get hurt. You don’t worry about sounding intolerant, judgmental, or even hysterical. You’re not concerned

about unfairly suppressing your child's "recreational rights." At that moment, you only know that being intolerant of speeding cars and judgmental about your child's ability to see them coming can save his life. What's true on the playground is equally true on the rest of the planet.

**(566)**

The leper shall be universally recognized as such by the prescribed marks So too, all other unclean persons should declare themselves as such. "Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry,

'Unclean! Unclean!' He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp." (Leviticus 13:45-46) Oh, if only! We just learned that "leprosy" is a metaphor for spiritual sickness. If only those with malignant doctrines to spread were this easy to identify. But these days, instead of sackcloth and ashes, they tend to wear expensive Italian suits. Instead of covering their mouths so their lies can't be spread, they stand before microphones and cameras and spew their diseases to anyone foolish enough to listen. Instead of being recognized as being unclean and defiled before God, they surround themselves with fawning sycophants.

Or maybe it just seems like spiritual leprosy is being ignored today. Maybe the truth is that the whole world has become one big leper colony. "The camp," the place where Yahweh's people dwell, has been reduced to tiny pockets of faithfulness in a sea of spiritual sickness. Most people today live "outside the camp." As Paul put it, "Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. From such people turn away!" (II Timothy 3:1-5) The Apostle has described precisely the kind of spiritual leprosy we see about us today, for we do indeed live "in the last days."

**(567)**

A leprous garment is unclean and defiles. "If a garment has a leprous plague in it, whether it is a woolen garment or a linen garment, whether it is in the warp or woof of linen or wool, whether in leather or in anything made of leather, and if the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it is a leprous plague and shall be shown to the priest. The priest shall examine the plague and isolate that which has the plague seven days. And he shall examine the plague on the seventh day. If the plague has spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, in the leather or in anything

made of leather, the plague is an active leprosy. It is unclean. He shall therefore burn that garment in which is the plague, whether warp or woof, in wool or in linen, or anything of leather, for it is an active leprosy; the garment shall be burned in the fire.” (Leviticus 12:47-52) Here’s where it becomes obvious that “leprosy” is not just a skin disease, but a symbol for something far more pervasive.

In scripture, our garments are a picture of how we are perceived—especially by Yahweh. As far back as Eden, what we wore (or didn’t wear) was an indication of our spiritual condition. When we were sinless, we needed no clothing whatsoever—our lives were transparent and without guile. The fig leaf ensemble our parents donned after they fell into sin was little more than an admission of their shame. The animal skins with which God replaced the leaves were our first hint that innocent blood would be required to cover our sins. In the same way, Joseph’s coat was a sign that he was loved by his father, as was the “best robe” placed upon the humbled shoulders of the repentant prodigal son. And time and again we are told of God’s elect being “arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” (Revelation 19:8) This in reality is a garment of light given to believers by Yahweh, through which He does not see our sin. Rather, He chooses to see only the glory and perfection of Yahshua (something that was previewed by Peter, James, and John when they saw Him “transfigured before them. His face shown like the sun and His clothes became white as the light.” (Matthew 17:2)

Contrast that glorious garment with the disease-ridden rags worn by the spiritually lost. “But if the priest examines it, and indeed the plague has not spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, then the priest shall command that they wash the thing in which is the plague; and he shall isolate it another seven days.” As with skin ailments, no snap judgments are made. The priest must go out of his way to see that every opportunity is given for the leprous garment to change, for the plague to correct itself. “Then the priest shall examine the plague after it has been washed; and indeed if the plague has not changed its color, though the plague has not spread, it is unclean, and you shall burn it in the fire; it continues eating away, whether the damage is outside or inside.” (Leviticus 13:53-55) It is not enough for the disease to stop spreading. One way or another, it must be eradicated. In the end, it’s a matter of who is doing the washing: we cannot make our covering acceptable—it is beyond our ability. But David knew the answer, praying to Yahweh, “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin... Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” (Psalm 51:2, 7)

“If the priest examines it, and indeed the plague has faded after washing it, then he shall tear it out of the garment, whether out of the warp or out of the woof, or out of the leather. But if it

appears again in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it is a spreading plague; you shall burn with fire that in which is the plague.” Likewise, our cleansing is not always a miraculous, “now you see it, now you don’t” sort of thing. Sometimes, even though the outward signs of our spiritual sickness have faded or been suppressed, only time will tell if they’re gone for good. “And if you wash the garment, either warp or woof, or whatever is made of leather, if the plague has disappeared from it, then it shall be washed a second time, and shall be clean.” This is more encouraging than we have a right to expect. Apparently, it is possible to be cleansed of our spiritual malignancies. It is possible to be rid of the influence of false doctrine. But note: the cleansing is a two-step process. It is not enough to turn your back on Islam or atheism or...you fill in the blank. One must subsequently receive the cleansing of sin from the only one who can—Yahshua—through our acceptance of His sacrifice. “This is the law of the leprous plague in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp or woof, or in anything made of leather, to pronounce it clean or to pronounce it unclean.” (Leviticus 13:56-59)

### **(568)**

A leprous house defiles. “When you have come into the land of Canaan, which I give you as a possession, and I put the leprous plague in a house in the land of your possession, and he who owns the house comes and tells the priest, saying, ‘It seems to me that there is some plague in the house,’ then the priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest goes into it to examine the plague, that all that is in the house may not be made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to examine the house.” (Leviticus 14:34-36) We’ve moved from skin afflictions and apparel infections to “sick building syndrome,” yet another metaphor for spiritual sickness. For convenience, we’re calling all of this stuff

“leprosy,” though there’s obviously a lot more than one physical malady in view. Here we see a new wrinkle: Yahweh Himself is said to be afflicting the house with the leprous plague, and the homeowner is expected to notice it and report it to the priest. This may seem odd, until we factor in Proverbs 3:33. “The curse of Yahweh is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the just.” Obviously, a “house” here is a symbol for something larger—where we live, expressed in broad strokes, our whole socio-economic-religio-political world.

Following the symbols to their logical conclusion, we see that the believer is to be cognizant of his surroundings, the society in which he lives. If he sees “a plague in the house,” (and who could miss the signs of spiritual disease in our world today?) he is to report it to the priest. That’s a picture of prayer, for the priest was the divinely appointed link between God and Man. The priest (and remember, our High Priest is Yahshua) first “empties the house,” that is, he



takes out those within it who remain undefiled. Interestingly, he does this before the stones of the house are subjected to examination, to testing or trial. On reflection, it seems this whole passage is eschatological in nature.

Note that the occupant is not to (1) tear down the house himself, (2) ignore the problem, (3) become tolerant of it, or (4) defer to the opinion of his neighbors or the government—human wisdom, such as it is. No, he is to go to the priest—that is, to Yahshua. But wait—we've already established that the plague is Yahweh's doing, sent in response to our society's wickedness. Are we supposed to appeal to the One who sent the disease in order to be kept out of it? Yes, we are. See Revelation 3:10 if you don't believe me.

The continuing instructions explain (sort of). "And he shall examine the plague; and indeed if the plague is on the walls of the house with ingrained streaks, greenish or reddish [the colors of Islam and Communism—a coincidence?], which appear to be deep in the wall, then the priest shall go out of the house, to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days." Is what seems like a problem really a problem? Only time will tell. The "seven days," while generally metaphorical of God's perfect timing, might possibly indicate the seven years of trial the earth will experience after the godly inhabitants have departed—a time known as the Tribulation. Note that during this time, the Priest (symbolic of Yahshua) is "out of the house," a condition that cannot come to pass as long as His people still inhabit the planet. As we saw before, isolation, separation, holiness, is part of the formula. The godly inhabitants of the "house" are not to be exposed to the potential threat while its true nature is yet fully undetermined. They are to be set apart from the world.

"And the priest [ultimately, Yahshua] shall come again on the seventh day [yeah, I read about that somewhere: it's the ultimate Sabbath—the Millennial reign of Christ] and look; and indeed if the plague has spread on the walls of the house, then the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which is the plague, and they shall cast them into an unclean place outside the city. And he shall cause the house to be scraped inside, all around, and the dust that they scrape off they shall pour out in an unclean place outside the city. Then they shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and he shall take other mortar and plaster the house." (Leviticus 14:37-42) Here's the bottom line. If an idea is truly toxic, the Priest (Yahshua) will, after giving it time to show its true colors, remove its presence and consign it to an "unclean place outside the city" (for its practitioners, metaphorical of hell). Thus doctrines like Ba'al worship, rabbinic Judaism, apostate "Christianity," Islam, and atheistic secular humanism will all appear in turn, poison their respective societies, and be removed from the house on the "seventh day," unceremoniously scraped off and hauled away. But Yahweh doesn't intend to leave gaping holes in the house of human society. "Other stones"—true believers, even if they

weren't originally part of the wall's construction—will be brought in as replacements: it's the Church of Repentant Laodicea. And the "plaster?" I believe this white, opaque coating is analogous to the garments of light God's children will wear in His Kingdom—imputed righteousness.

## **Ritual Purity and Impurity**

### **569. That a man, having a running issue, defiles (Lev. 15:1-15)**

A man, having a running issue, defiles. "When any man has a discharge from his body, his discharge is unclean." (Leviticus 15:2) Not to be picky, but it's not the man that defiles, no matter what shape he's in. It's his discharge, any abnormal physical condition characterized by an unusual flowing or congestion: "And this shall be his uncleanness in regard to his discharge—whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is stopped up by his discharge, it is his uncleanness." As we saw in Mitzvah #503 (where we were discussing the sacrifices to be offered upon one's cleansing), the "issue" could be anything from a runny or stopped-up nose, a bronchial condition where the sufferer is coughing up phlegm, to diarrhea, to pus from an infected wound. All these things are indicators of disease or injury, and more specifically, evidence that the body is trying to heal itself.

Moses goes on to describe the rules and conditions pertaining to this particular type of "uncleanness." "Every bed is unclean on which he who has the discharge lies, and everything on which he sits shall be unclean. And whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. He who sits on anything on which he who has the discharge sat shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. And he who touches the body of him who has the discharge shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. If he who has the discharge spits on him who is clean, then he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. Any saddle on which he who has the discharge rides shall be unclean. Whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until evening. He who carries any of those things shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. And whomever the one who has the discharge touches, and has not rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. The vessel of earth that he who has the discharge touches shall be broken, and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water." As usual, the remedy for coming in contact with the defiling discharge is washing in water and waiting for time to pass. Caregivers of the ill or injured person are likely to become "defiled" as a result of their benevolence, leading us to observe once again that "uncleanness" of this sort is not considered sin, though cleansing is necessary nevertheless. The same thing is true of the sufferer himself:

“And when he who has a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, wash his clothes, and bathe his body in running water; then he shall be clean.” (Leviticus 15:3-13)

Hygiene, I suppose, would have been enough of a reason for this kind of thing to be codified in the Torah. But I believe the lessons run deeper. Consider again the “carrier” of the defilement — God’s amazing built-in capacity for our bodies to heal themselves, rid themselves of infection, and isolate and eliminate disease-causing microbes. (Those who insist that these capacities are merely the result of eons of undirected evolution—millions of fortuitous mutations in the human genome, one after the other—are merely demonstrating their inability or unwillingness to do the math.) When our bodies are attacked, God’s defenses rush in to do battle: mucous quickly builds up to deal with dust or mold spores—we sneeze and cough spontaneously to throw off the invaders. Food-borne toxins are eliminated automatically through vomiting or diarrhea. And, perhaps the most amazing defenders of all, white blood cells rush in to deal with all kinds of potential threats: neutrophils deal with bacterial infections; eosinophils attack parasites; basophils work against allergens; lymphocytes manufacture antibodies to protect us from being attacked by the same invaders in the future, and the list goes on. All of these defenders cause the “discharges” that defile us. We might experience pus in a wound or sweat from a fever, but without these “defiling” symptoms, we’d simply die.

The discharges aren’t the problem. They’re merely evidence that there’s a battle raging within our bodies. The real culprits are the viruses, bacteria, allergens, and parasites that attack from without. Put in that light, the spiritual applications are easier to see. Our souls are attacked incessantly. Satan uses a plethora of spiritual viruses to kill us if he can, and if not, make us sick enough to ignore or deny our God. So when we see people around us struggling with spiritual issues, we need to know that there is danger in becoming a caregiver. While meeting their needs, we need to remain set apart from the falsehoods that trouble them.

I’ll offer one example (real-life, not hypothetical) of how this works, but there are too many possible applications to even begin to list them. The virus in this case is Islam, which comes in two basic varieties: a virulent, deadly strain and a milder seemingly benign strain. Robert Spencer (JihadWatch.org), an author, scholar, and self-styled expert on all things Islamic, has set himself up as the care provider to a world infected with Islam—a noble goal. But he (a Roman Catholic) has no immunity against Satan’s wiles. His proposed treatment of the disease consists of supporting and encouraging the mild strain while condemning the obviously evil “terrorist” variety. What Robert doesn’t seem to realize is that the two strains of Islam have virtually identical DNA. Worse, the “peaceful” strain mutates into the virulent, evil variety at the drop of a hat, but the transformation never seems to happen the other way around. Robert

therefore finds himself wading knee-deep through Islam-caused diarrhea (I guess you could call it Muhammad's Revenge), and he can't smell the stench. He is defiled and he doesn't even know it.

Meanwhile, a dear friend of mine, Craig Winn, was called by God for a time to be a caregiver to the same Islam-infested world. By examining Islam's "genetic code," its scriptures, he concluded that both strains were deadly (though they presented different symptoms), so he did what he could to make the world safer from all forms of Muslim malevolence. Craig had no choice but to get dirty during the process, finding his studies in Islam's most revered writings to be a spiritually oppressive task. But he got himself "inoculated" daily with heavy doses of Yahweh's Scriptures—the "washing of water by the Word," as Paul calls it—and looked longingly for the hour when the sun would finally set on the job Yahweh had set for him to do. My friend became "defiled" for the world's sake, but he has been thoroughly cleansed. (His insights, by the way, are available free online at ProphetOfDoom.net—four or five thousand pages of irrefutable evidence against Islam.)

The ultimate example of one who willingly became "defiled" for the sake of an infected world, of course, is Yahshua the Messiah. He gave up the "clean room" of heaven to drown in the filth of humanity for our benefit. (Puts the word "Messiah," meaning "anointed," in a whole new light, doesn't it?) I'd say a big "thank-you" is in order. Or are you afraid to get your hands dirty?

#### **570. That the seed of copulation defiles (Lev. 15:16)**

The seed of copulation defiles. "If any man has an emission of semen, then he shall wash all his body in water, and be unclean until evening. And any garment and any leather on which there is semen, it shall be washed with water, and be unclean until evening. Also, when a woman lies with a man, and there is an emission of semen, they shall bathe in water, and be unclean until evening." (Leviticus 15:16-18) Proving once again that being "unclean" is simply indicative of the human condition (not "sin," but necessitating purification anyway), here we see that an emission of semen defiles both the man and the woman he has lain with. It is significant that God's very first recorded command to mankind was to "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth." (Genesis 1:28) It's axiomatic that without the "emission of semen" and without menstruation (see Mitzvah #572), this fruitfulness would have been impossible. Yahweh, having designed us, knew that. Thus His command required us to become "defiled," even before our fall into sin.

This line of reasoning leads us to an important truth: our mortal bodies are not designed to inherit heaven. They were made for this earth—made from the same elements, from "dust." I surmise that without this physical type of construction, our God-given ability to choose between

good and evil would have been meaningless. Spirits, even created spirits like angels, cannot die, and Yahweh never gave them the prerogative of choice. Their assigned role is

submission, obedience, and loyalty. But choice is our primary gift. We alone are given the choice of whether to reciprocate God's love or not. In order to choose between life and death then, we must be able to comprehend what it is to die. Paul revealed the ramifications of this to the Corinthians. His bottom line was, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption." (I Corinthians 15:50)

Our bodies in all their attributes, whether physical, emotional, or intellectual, simply cannot stand in the presence of Almighty God, "from whose face the earth and heaven fled away." (Revelation 20:11) But Yahweh created us to enjoy fellowship with Him. To make that possible, He has implemented a two-stage solution. First God took upon Himself the image of a man: Yahshua walked among us and gave His life for us some 2,000 years ago, and has promised to come again to reign among us. This explains His title, Immanuel: "God with us."

The second phase is just the reverse: it requires us to change into the image of God. How is this done? Paul goes on to explain, sort of. "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" (I Corinthians 15:51-54) Believers will be changed from mortals into immortal beings, suddenly, permanently, and all at one time. Our old bodies will be transformed, recreated, translated, into a new form that, quickened by the indwelling of God's Spirit, will live forever. Apparently, Yahshua walked among his Disciples for forty days after His resurrection in just such a body.

This new immortal, "spiritual," body cannot be defiled or made unclean. In this body, we will experience nothing that requires cleansing, and that includes "emissions of semen."

Immortality apparently cannot beget mortality; life cannot father death. Right about now, all you guys are gritting your teeth and mumbling, "Shoot. I kinda liked 'emissions of semen.'" Will God replace sex with something you'll find even more rewarding? Count on it.

That purification from all kinds of defilement shall be effected by immersion in the waters of a mikvah (Lev. 15:16)

Purification from all kinds of defilement shall be effected by immersion in the waters of a mikvah. “If any man has an emission of semen, then he shall wash all his body in water, and be unclean until evening. And any garment and any leather on which there is semen, it shall be washed with water, and be unclean until evening. Also, when a woman lies with a man, and there is an emission of semen, they shall bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.” (Leviticus 15:16-18) Judaism 101 defines a “Mikvah” as, “Literally: gathering. A ritual bath used for spiritual purification. It is used primarily in conversion rituals and after the period of sexual separation during a woman’s menstrual cycles, but many Chasidim immerse themselves in the mikvah regularly for general spiritual purification.” Many archeological sites in Israel reveal elaborate waterworks that were designed primarily to provide running water to large mikvah ritual purification pools, deep enough for total immersion. There’s a really nice one, for example, at the Qumran dig (an ancient Essene commune). Typically, they feature two parallel sets of stone steps divided by a wall, one for walking into the community pool and the other for leaving it. It’s clear that Torah-observant Jews of Bible times were serious about ritual purity, for the Torah is quite specific in its instructions.

The instructions, however, did not specify how people and their unclean belongings were to be washed, so it’s highly presumptive of Maimonides to restrict purification efficacy to “the waters of a mikvah.” It’s kind of like baptism in the New Covenant scriptures—God never actually told us how to do it. Why? Because He is more concerned with our hearts’ attitude than our adherence to textual correctness. Yes, baptizo means “to immerse” in Greek. But when a persecuted Christian pastor in Communist China, imprisoned for his faith, uses the only water he can find—a trickle from a filthy sink in the prison lavatory—to “baptize” his repentant fellow inmates, does Yahweh cry foul and refuse to accept the act because they weren’t actually immersed? I think not.

#### **572. That a menstruating woman is unclean and defiles others (Lev. 15:19-24)**

A menstruating woman is unclean and defiles others. “If a woman has a discharge, and the discharge from her body is blood, she shall be set apart seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. Everything that she lies on during her impurity shall be unclean; also everything that she sits on shall be unclean. Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. And whoever touches anything that she sat on shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. If anything is on her bed or on anything on which she sits, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening. And if any man lies with her at all, so that her impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days; and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean. (Leviticus 15:19-24) Here again we see that “defilement” or “uncleanness” is not sin, but merely part of being human, part of

being a physical, flesh-and-blood person walking the earth. The irony gets heavy this time, for a woman's normal menstruation cycle is in itself a cleansing process, the body's way of discarding an old, unfertilized eggs to make way for fresh opportunities for pregnancy.

Perhaps that's God's lesson here: we all miss opportunities for fruitfulness (which is all the menstrual cycle really is), but we can't expect to be effective in God's service if we allow the baggage of yesterday's failures to accumulate in our lives. Rather, we need to periodically "clean house," undergo a time of purification and renewal. If we don't, our uncleanness defiles not only ourselves, but also those whose lives touch ours. This periodic renewal entails more than just a conscious effort to cleanse our minds and spirits of the world's influence once in a while. An occasional pause from our labors is also called for, and if Yahweh's design of the female body is any indication, that hiatus should consume as much as one quarter of our time. The Sabbath rest is a major component of that by God's design, but we should also seize other opportunities to "recharge our spiritual batteries." Yahshua, you'll recall, was forever wandering off into the hills to meditate and pray by Himself.

Just because we were instructed to "be fruitful and multiply," it is not expected that every egg a woman produces should result in pregnancy. Likewise, though being in God's service is a great privilege, we should never get the idea that everything we "do for Him" must either bear fruit or it's a waste of time. The cleansing process, the break in the schedule, is built into our anatomy. We dishonor the God who made us if we act as if He can't get along without our efforts twenty-four-seven. Sometimes He'd prefer us to play hooky, go fishing, leave the work undone—just as long as we invite Him to come along with us.

### **573. That a woman, having a running issue, defiles (Lev. 15:25-27)**

A woman, having a running issue, defiles. "If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, other than at the time of her customary impurity, or if it runs beyond her usual time of impurity, all the days of her unclean discharge shall be as the days of her customary impurity. She shall be unclean. Every bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her as the bed of her impurity; and whatever she sits on shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her impurity. Whoever touches those things shall be unclean; he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening." (Leviticus 15:25-27) In #569 above, we encountered an identically worded mitzvah concerning men. All of our observations there would apply to women as well. Here, Moses speaks specifically of a woman's discharge that runs beyond the time of her ordinary menses, extending the conditions of her ritual impurity as long as the condition persists.

We are immediately reminded, of course, of the woman mentioned in Mark 5 and Luke 8 who had suffered from this condition for twelve long years. She reached out in faith and touched the border of Yahshua's garment, and immediately both of them knew that she had been healed. Technically, she had "defiled" Yahshua by touching Him—or would have, had she not been instantaneously cleansed. What I'd like to point out is the little drama she interrupted by doing so. Yahshua was on His way to raise someone from the dead—a little girl who had been born precisely when the woman had been afflicted with her malady—twelve years before. Coincidence? I doubt it. Twelve is apparently the number of completion in God's economy—especially when it comes to people (e.g. twelve Israelite tribes; twelve apostles). Thus when we see both the woman with the issue of blood and the daughter of Jairus brought together in the same twelve-year context, we witness the complete failure of the human condition without Christ. We are completely impure and hopelessly mortal—until we encounter Yahshua.

**574. To carry out the ordinance of the Red Heifer so that its ashes will always be available (Num. 19:9) See Parah Adumah: Red Heifer.**

Carry out the ordinance of the Red Heifer so that its ashes will always be available. "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you [Moses and Aaron] a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never come. You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, that he may take it outside the camp, and it shall be slaughtered before him." (Numbers 19:2-3) So begins the so-called "ordinance of the Red Heifer." We've got a big problem right off the bat. The animal specified is not a heifer (which, according to Webster, is "a young cow which has not borne a calf"). That would have been an eglah in Hebrew, the heifer mentioned in Mitzvot #296 and #297. The word used here is par, ordinarily translated "bull," "young bull," "bullock," or occasionally "ox." Par denotes an adolescent to fully mature male bovine, usually inferring that the animal has not been castrated. "Red," by the way, is adom, meaning bloodred in color. It's related to "Edom," the name by which Esau became known after trading his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of red stew—in effect declaring Jacob the winner of the world's first chili cook-off.

Anyway, the "red bull" was to be taken outside the camp (unlike the typical sacrifice, which was slain at the altar) and slaughtered there for a specific purpose ("purifying from sin"—see verse 9). It should be obvious by now that the "red bull" symbolizes Yahshua Himself, who was slain outside the walls of the city in order to purify us from our sins. "And Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood seven times directly in front of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight: its hide, its flesh, its blood, and its offal shall be burned...." Let's sort out the players here. Aaron was still the High Priest at this time (vs. 1), so his son Eleazar the priest was his follower, his apostle if you will.



Thus I believe Eleazar represents the faithful witnesses to Yahshua's sacrifice. In their sight, Yahshua was subjected to the fires of judgment on our behalf. And as Eleazar's finger sprinkled the blood before the tabernacle, Yahshua's disciples (ultimately including us) are to take a hands-on role in the process of mankind's purification.

"And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer...." The three elements mentioned here are telling. Cedar, a tall, strong, pest-resistant tree, symbolizes the pride of human strength and splendor—the pinnacle of man's achievement (cf. Ezekiel 31:3, Jeremiah 22:7). Hyssop represents the other side of the coin: our intrinsic insignificance—the concept that we can do great things only when allowing ourselves to be used as an implement in God's hand. A humble shrub of the marjoram or mint family, hyssop was the tool used to apply the blood of the Passover Lamb to the doorposts, and it even played a small part in the crucifixion scene (John 19:29). David, in Psalm 51:7, refers to hyssop as Yahweh's agent of the purging of sin. When Yahshua noted the Pharisees' tithing of "mint," He was referring to their nitpicking over the smallest, most trivial of matters—hyssop. Scarlet is a metaphor for sin (see Isaiah 1:18) as well as the blood required to atone for it. Physically, scarlet was a red dye made from the dried, crushed carcasses of female cochineal insects (a.k.a. scale), or the textile article dyed with it. Thus by the Torah's definition, it was a substance that defiled on contact. These three substances together represent the irony of the human condition—its irrational pride, its irrelevance apart from Yahweh, and the indelible stain of its defilement. They were all ritually consumed in fire along with the red bull. This tells us that Christ's sacrifice purges us of the negative aspects of our human nature.

"Then the priest shall wash his clothes, he shall bathe in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp; the priest shall be unclean until evening. And the one who burns it shall wash his clothes in water, bathe in water, and shall be unclean until evening." (Numbers 19:4-7) The witnesses of Yahshua's sacrifice, represented by Eleazar and his Levite assistants, acknowledge their fallen human condition—their uncleanness before God—and allow themselves to be cleansed. Our "clothes" are a scriptural metaphor for our state of acceptability before God. In this life they are "washed," but ultimately, they are exchanged for garments of light, the very righteousness of Yahshua. Likewise, being "unclean until evening" is a picture of our earthly existence. When the sun sets upon our mortal lives, when we trade our corrupt mortality for incorruptible immortality (through death and/or rapture—see I Corinthians 15), we shall be rendered forever undefiled in God's sight.

"Then a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and store them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification; it is for purifying from sin." I'll explain in a moment what was to be done

with the ashes and how they were to be utilized. “And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. It shall be a statute forever to the children of Israel and to the stranger who dwells among them.” (Numbers 19:8-10) Like the priest and the Levites who presided over the sacrifice and burning of the red bull, the Levites who gathered and stored the ashes for later use were rendered “unclean” in the process of carrying out their duties. If we are human—even if we are children of Yahweh—we are cursed by the human condition: we are “defiled.” The cure for this, as I explained above, is washing and waiting. Note that Yahweh specifically applied this truth to both Israel and the gentiles—the “strangers”—among them (these days, that’s the Church, we believers who are indebted to Israel for their role in conveying to us the Torah and the Messiah).

I should, however, draw a distinction between the temporary uncleanness of a redeemed individual and the catastrophic condition of one who is not part of Yahweh’s family. It is pointless to “clean” a dead body. You can wash it all you want—it’s still going to rot and stink. No amount of “clothes washing” or “waiting until evening” will make a corpse pure before

Yahweh. Worse, we are all spiritually stillborn. We must be quickened—made alive—by God’s Spirit if the cleansing process is to be efficacious. The Torah’s rituals are in themselves only a metaphor for those of us in whom Yahweh’s Spirit dwells. For us, cleanness (symbolized in the Torah by the washing of clothes and waiting until evening) is achieved through a life of prayer: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) Note that as in the Torah, that’s two different things, atonement and purification. We’re in need of both.

#### **575. That a corpse defiles (Num. 19:11-16) See Care for the Dead.**

A corpse defiles. “He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean. Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of Yahweh. That person shall be cut off from Israel. He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness is still on him.” (Numbers 19:11-13) We are still within the context of the so-called “Red Heifer” law. Here we are given our first hint as to what is to be done with the ashes of the red bull, prepared as in Mitzvah #574. The “water of purification” is to be sprinkled on someone who has touched a dead body. If he does not purify himself as prescribed, he not only remains ritually unclean himself, but he is also said to “defile the Tabernacle of Yahweh” as well. Since the Tabernacle is a symbol-rich presentation of God’s Messiah and His plan of redemption, the one who has violated this

principle will be “cut off from Israel,” a thinly veiled euphemism for spiritual death, since the name “Israel” means “God prevails.”

If that sounds a little harsh, consider this. Although the phrase “he who touches a dead body” is a proper translation (and no doubt the correct primary meaning) it is not the only thing this connotes. Hebrew is a very economical language. The same word is often used in an active (Qal ) or passive (Niphal) voice or stem. Furthermore, the intensive or intentional active voice (Piel) and passive voice (Pual) are often the same word, as is the causative voice (Hiphal). So naga, the verb translated (in the Qal stem) “to touch” in our passage, could legitimately be rendered “to reach,” “strike,” “inflict,” or even “to arrive,” and it could also be correctly translated, “to be touched,” “to be stricken,” etc. Therefore when we see “he who touches a dead body” we should also rightly contemplate the meaning, “he who is touched by death,” or “he who has reached (or arrived at) death.”

Okay, so what is the remedy for one who has become so intimately acquainted with death? Good question, since because we are mortal, that description fits any and all of us. He is to be sprinkled with the water of purification (that is, water that has been mixed with the ashes of the red bull) on two separate occasions, the third day and the seventh day. Interesting numbers, considering where the ashes in the water came from—a transparent dress rehearsal of the Messiah’s sacrifice as it had been predicted in the Feasts of Yahweh. The third day of the sacrificial process (we can see in retrospect) fell on the Feast of Firstfruits. In order for the Firstfruits, the “Firstborn of the dead,” to be presented as required before Yahweh, He had to rise under His own power from the dead. That resurrection was the culmination of the Messiah’s sacrifice, the proof that it had been efficacious because the sacrifice had been worthy.

The seventh day also speaks of an event commemorated in one of the seven Feasts of Yahweh. The Feast of Unleavened Bread marked the day that sin, represented by leaven, was removed from our lives as Yahshua’s body lay in the tomb on our behalf. But this was a seven day feast. (To review, Passover fell on the 14th of Nisan, Unleavened Bread began on the 15th—a mandated Sabbath—and ran through the 21st, and the Feast of Firstfruits was on the 16th.) The Feast of Unleavened Bread concluded on the seventh day and was followed on the eighth day by another Sabbath—this one metaphorical of eternity—our permanent day of rest. The lesson is therefore clear: our cleansing is not complete until the Feast of Unleavened

Bread is fully accomplished. Yes, we are declared to be free from sin on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But our actual purification is a process that continues as long as we inhabit our fallen mortal bodies. “He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days.” The bottom line: we have all been touched by death—stricken by the uncleanness

of our mortal circumstance. The only cure for this condition is to be washed in the water of purification—the Word of God—which is made efficacious by the sacrifice of Yahweh’s Messiah.

### **We are still in the area of Ritual Purity**

**(576)**

The waters of separation defile one who is clean, and cleanse the unclean from pollution by a dead body. “And for an unclean person they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel. A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, sprinkle it on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, the slain, the dead, or a grave.” (Numbers 19:17-18) Here we see the instructions for preparing the “water of purification” used in the ordinance of the so-called “Red Heifer” (See also Mitzvot #574 and #575). The ashes of the red bull are put within a container (metaphorical of one’s body) and mixed with running or flowing water—the word chay actually means “living” or “alive.” It’s another symbolic reference to Yahshua.

The water-ash mixture was to be sprinkled upon whatever had become defiled by contact with death. Two things bear notice here. First, the person doing the sprinkling had to be “clean.” In the end, there is only One such Person—Yahshua Himself. Second, the implement with which the sprinkling was done was hyssop, the humble shrub that was burned along with the red bull. Hyssop, you’ll recall, was used to smear the blood of the original Passover Lamb (another Messianic symbol) onto the upright doorposts of the believing Israelite’s homes. It was also referred to by a chastised King David after the disastrous Bathsheba affair: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.” (Psalm 51:7-11) David is asking Yahweh to fulfill the promise of the ordinance of the Red Bull. He’s pleading that the sins that have defiled him—sins through which he has touched death—might be washed away through the sprinkling of the waters of purification upon him—“purging him with hyssop.” And his plea tells us the effect the precept of the Red Bull will have upon the repentant believer: cleanness in God’s sight, joy, healing, fellowship with Yahweh, a dismissal of our sins, a renewal of our spirit, and the continued indwelling of Yahweh’s Spirit within us. Who could ask for more?

Moses wasn't finished relating the instructions. "The clean person shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, wash his clothes, and bathe in water; and at evening he shall be clean. But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of Yahweh. The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him; he is unclean. It shall be a perpetual statute for them." (Numbers 19:19-21) We are reminded that although He lived a sinless life, Yahshua "became sin" on our behalf. He willingly subjected Himself to the uncleanness of the human condition so that we might have the opportunity to become clean. As we saw in Mitzvah #575, the third-day and seventh-day cleansings were executed by Yahshua Himself in fulfillment of the Feasts of Yahweh, and in so doing, He also fulfilled the requirements of the "clean person" who sprinkles mankind with the waters of purification.

Further, the precept fairly screams that the principle of the Red Bull's cleansing extended beyond Theocratic Israel to all of Man's generations: this is a "perpetual statute." How many different ways has Yahweh told us about His plan for saving us? Scores? Hundreds? When you know what to look for, they're ubiquitous in the Scriptures. I'll bet nobody's ever found them all. The pity is, Maimonides never even found one.

Maimonides did, however, point out something that we shouldn't overlook. "He who sprinkles the water of purification shall wash his clothes; and he who touches the water of purification shall be unclean until evening. Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches it shall be unclean until evening." (Numbers 19:21-22) There is a "catch" with the waters of purification. Though he upon whom it is sprinkled is made clean, he who does the sprinkling is thereby rendered unclean. Our analysis in the previous mitzvot should tell us why. Eleazar, not Aaron, is tasked with purifying the lost and defiled world with the waters of purification, the ashes of the red bull dissolved in living water. That is, it is not Christ (our High Priest) directly who administers cleansing in this world, but rather His disciples, His followers—us! In order to have a cleansing effect upon the world, we must be here, being in the world but not of it. When we rub shoulders with an unclean world, our sleeves sometimes get dirty. That's why the Holy Spirit dwells within us. As Yahshua explained, "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (John 14:26; see also John 15:26) That is the process that Paul described as the "washing of water by the Word" (cf. Ephesians 5:26), in other words, the cleansing process we undergo in this life.

I would be remiss in neglecting to mention that the Holy Spirit will not always be here cleansing the world through the agency (the "hyssop," if you will) of His called-out people. Paul describes

it: “Now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains [He’s referring to the Holy Spirit, restraining evil and cleansing the earth through the presence and purpose of Yahshua’s Ekklesia] will do so until He is taken out of the way.” This will happen at the rapture of the Church, for Yahshua’s promise in John 14:16 assures us that the Holy Spirit will abide with us forever. No Spirit, no Church, no cleansing influence upon the earth. “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (II Thessalonians 2:6-12) That’s a graphic but sober assessment of what it will be like when God’s people are no longer here on earth to present Yahshua, to sprinkle the water of purification, the living water imbued with the ashes of the red bull, upon a world that insists on touching death.

**(577)**

Do not shave off the hair from the scale. And on the seventh day the priest shall examine the sore; and indeed if the scale has not spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the scale does not appear deeper than the skin, he shall shave himself, but the scale he shall not shave. And the priest shall isolate the one who has the scale another seven days. (Leviticus 13:32-33) We’re back in leprosy land, folks, territory we explored in Mitzvot #502 and #565-568, and will continue to do for the rest of this chapter, through #580. Leviticus 13 and 14 are all about the examination, isolation, and declaration of “leprosy,” which as we have seen is a catch-all metaphor for spiritual sickness, heresy, or false teaching.

Though Maimonides’ mitzvah zeroes in on one small detail, the precept is considerably more complicated. The instruction begins, as usual, with the realization that something might be amiss, followed by a close examination of the problem. “If a man or woman has a sore on the head or the beard, then the priest shall examine the sore; and indeed if it appears deeper than the skin, and there is in it thin yellow hair, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a scaly leprosy of the head or beard....” There’s an old saying: “Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes all the way to the bone.” It’s kind of like that with spiritual things. You can manage to look spiritually intact some of the time, but what you believe deep down will eventually come to light. If you’re merely practicing religion instead of enjoying a familial relationship with Yahweh, your

lack of trust will tend to announce itself at the first sign of adversity. And when things begin to look hopeless, you'll feel like following the advice of Job's wife: "Curse God and die."

And then there's the converse situation—it may not be "leprosy"—spiritual sickness—but it is a "sore spot," so to speak, something that doesn't line up with the commonly accepted view. Maybe it's heresy, but maybe it's something true and valuable that everybody missed until now. "But if the priest examines the scaly sore, and indeed it does not appear deeper than the skin, and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall isolate the one who has the scale seven days." (Leviticus 13:29-31) After examination, the next step is isolation—carefully and lovingly making sure the afflicted soul is not in a position to pass his "disease" on to others until it can be determined if that's really what it is. In spiritual terms, that means being cautious about what doctrines we embrace. If you don't know from experience and study that what someone is telling you is compatible with God's truth, then isolate him until you've had a chance to check it out. This precludes the two other possible courses of action—accepting the teaching uncritically (blindly pronouncing it "clean," in other words) or rejecting it out of hand merely because it's unfamiliar or not commonly understood (a knee-jerk diagnosis of uncleanness).

I'll give you a couple of examples of how this works. In the mid-1800s, a fellow named Darby "rediscovered" the doctrine of the rapture. Even today, some reject his findings ('cause they're new, something the Church had ignored for seventeen centuries) and some heartily embrace them without any sort of critical examination. Both paths can lead to error. In this case, the doctrine of the rapture holds up beautifully when tested in the crucible of scriptural truth.

In the second example, I'm the suspected "leper." When doing research for my book on Biblical prophecy, Future History, I noticed that multiple avenues of evidence converged on a single date, to the exclusion of all others, for the commencement of Yahshua's kingdom on earth, a date from which numerous other last-day's events could be calculated. My conclusion wasn't based on vague feelings, wishful thinking, or speculative estimates, but scriptural data—cold, hard numbers that had to have been given to us for a reason. This, of course, flies in the face of generations of Bible expositors who've taken half a verse out of context and made doctrine out of it: Jesus said "No man knows the day or the hour," so we can't know anything about the timing of the last days. Don't even ask! Then I come along and point out stuff that all those really smart guys before me never saw. In the parlance of Moses, it's a "scaly sore that does not appear deeper than the skin." Now, according to the law of leprosy, you are neither to accept my findings without a second thought, nor flatly reject them just because you've never heard of this before. You're supposed to "isolate" my teachings—compare what I've said to scripture, mull it over, pray about it, put my logic to the test, and only then decide whether I'm right or

wrong, clean or unclean. (The date, by the way, is revealed and discussed in an appendix to Future History.)

At this point, we're where Maimonides put his toe in the water. Our initial text, Leviticus 13:32-33, takes us to the next step. We're to take away everything that might be confusing us or obfuscating the issue—our previously held notions, traditions, and the opinions of men—in other words, we must “shave.” Then we're to continue our contemplation and examination of the “sore.” We're not to shave the suspected area, however. That is, don't misquote the presumed heretic, don't edit what's been proposed. Judge what he really said, not what you might be inclined to read into it. In the example I've used, for instance, don't go off saying “Ken knows when the rapture is going to occur.” I said no such thing.

Moses' instructions continue. “On the seventh day the priest shall examine the scale; and indeed if the scale has not spread over the skin, and does not appear deeper than the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. He shall wash his clothes and be clean. But if the scale should at all spread over the skin after his cleansing, then the priest shall examine him; and indeed if the scale has spread over the skin, the priest need not seek for yellow hair. He is unclean. But if the scale appears to be at a standstill, and there is black hair grown up in it, the scale has healed. He is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.” (Leviticus 13:34-37) The spiritual application: after due consideration and study, the proposed doctrine should be either rejected or accepted, depending solely upon how it holds up in the light of God's truth. I can't help reflecting that if this procedure had been followed throughout the church age, we never would have fallen into the error and apathy that plague us today.

### **(578)**

The procedure of cleansing leprosy, whether of a man or of a house, takes place with cedar-wood, hyssop, scarlet thread, two birds, and running water. “This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him; and indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper, then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.” (Leviticus 14:2-7) It may seem like I'm splitting straws, but there is an important difference



between being “healed” and being “cleansed” (as the unfortunate English translation puts it), though they sound like very similar concepts to our ears. The leper in this case has already been healed when he is brought to the priest for “cleansing.” “To heal” in Hebrew is *rapha*, a verb meaning “to cause or promote restoration of health or a right state after being sick, diseased, or injured.” (Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains) It is Yahweh who does the healing, not the priest. In fact, as I pointed out in Mitzvah #502, the only Biblical record we have of anyone being healed of leprosy under the rules of the Torah is when Yahshua—Yahweh in the flesh—did it.

*Rapha*, the healing that has been accomplished, is contrasted here with the noun *tahara*, translated “cleansing” or the related verb *taher*, meaning to cleanse or purify, whether physically, ceremonially, or morally. Because of its juxtaposition with *rapha* (healing), it is clear that the ceremonial element is being stressed here: the priest pronounces the restored leper to be clean; he performs the ceremony that announces his cleansing to the community. And if we recall that leprosy is a metaphor for spiritual sickness, the moral purification aspect becomes clear as well.

This pronouncement of cleanness (as opposed to the actual healing) is the subject of our mitzvah. The ritual has details similar to some others we have seen. First, the use of cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop was seen in the ordinance of the so-called “Red Heifer” (See Mitzvah #574), which provided cleansing for one who had been defiled by touching death. To reprise my conclusion, “These three substances together represent the irony of the human condition—its irrational pride, its irrelevance apart from Yahweh, and the indelible stain of its defilement.” There they were burned in the fire that was reducing the Red Bull to ashes; here they are dipped in the blood of the sacrificial bird. This brings to mind a second parallel: one bird was sacrificed while another was dipped in the blood of the first and then released. This is reminiscent of the two goats of the Day of Atonement, one of which was slain while the other was set free in the wilderness. Both the birds and the goats speak of the substitutionary death of the Messiah—allowing us the freedom to live in God’s grace. A third parallel is the mention of running (or “living” water), which as we have seen (Mitzvot #569 and #576) is symbolic of the cleansing power of Yahshua the Messiah.

It should be noted that there is a completely separate group of sacrifices the cleansed leper was to offer up upon this confirmation of his restoration to health. They’re covered in Leviticus 14:10-32, and include offerings of grain and oil (the *mincha*), a trespass offering (*asham*), sin offering (*chata’t*) and a burnt offering (*olah*). There’s a detailed explanation of what these signify toward the end of Chapter 12 of this book. All these sacrifices are offered in response to the leper’s cleansing, not given in order to attain it.

The order of events in the law of leprosy (something that applies to all of us on a spiritual level) is: (1) We contract the disease, which I believe is a thinly veiled euphemism for the mortal state we all inherited from Adam; (2) We come to terms with the fact that we are ill, sinful, stricken with a malady that defiles and can ultimately kill us; (3) We are examined, found to be unclean, and isolated from the household of faith; (4) We receive the healing provided by Yahweh through the life of His Son Yahshua; (5) This healing is thankfully recognized as we are pronounced clean, though we still inhabit our formerly leprous bodies, (6) We relegate religious observance to its proper place—not a path to salvation, but a response to it, and (7) The state of being clean and whole is brought to fruition on the “eighth day” (verse 10), pointing toward the eternal state in which we will be forever free of the evil that plagues us in this life. (This interpretation, of course—that the law of leprosy is prophetic of Yahweh’s plan of redemption—would have given Maimonides a rash.)

### **(579)**

The leper shall shave all his hair. “He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days. But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows—all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean.” (Leviticus 14:8-9) It isn’t just any leper who is to shave all his hair off—only the one who has been healed of his disease, the one “who is to be cleansed (taher—pronounced clean).”

The commentaries typically speak of this shaving (Hebrew: galah) as merely part of the purification process, but I think there’s more to it. In Mitzvah #577, we were instructed to shave off the hair of the leper in order to get a better look at the “scaly sore,” but we were not to shave the sore spot itself—where the “thin yellow hair,” if any, was an indicator of the leprosy. There I concluded that “shaving” was a euphemism for scraping off the things that tend to obfuscate a spiritual issue—our traditions, religious customs, or the opinions of men that our peers have embraced. We are, in other words, to judge a matter on its own merit in the light of scripture, recognizing that sometimes our religious traditions are themselves the problem!

Actually, there are two “shavings” the ex-leper is to perform, one at the beginning of his week-long cleansing ceremony, and another at the end. If the spiritual ramifications of the seven-step leprosy/redemption timeline I proposed at the end of Mitzvah #578 have any merit, these two “shavings” are significant instructions of how we’re to live as believers in Yahweh. When we first recognize our condition and receive the “cure,” we are to do it without reference to religion,

custom, or dogma—our healing is to be shorn of the trappings of religion that tend to obscure the core issues of our redemption. Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that the habits and traditions we adopt in the practice of our faith are necessarily a bad thing (though they can be). We shouldn't have to reinvent the wheel every time we wish to approach Yahweh in a corporate setting. But they are not in themselves the point, and should never become the point. We are to begin our walk of faith naked before God (for indeed we are), and whatever religious habits we develop over our life as believers should grow naturally into place, not be imposed by others from outside our own personal experience.

The second "shaving" is done on the seventh day. Yahweh's ubiquitous six-plus-one metaphor—six units of effort and endeavor capped by one unit of God's grace, followed by an eternity of fellowship and communion—leads us to conclude that man-made religious tradition will be eliminated completely when Yahshua comes to reign among us upon the earth. That's not to say that our corporate worship will devolve into anarchy during the Millennium, however. The rites of the Torah (which as we have seen all point toward the Messiah) will be revisited for the benefit of the progeny of the Tribulation survivors. (See Future History, Chapters 26-28, for a detailed discussion of the Millennial reign.)

### **(580)**

Do not pluck out the marks of leprosy. "Take heed in an outbreak of leprosy, that you carefully observe and do according to all that the priests, the Levites, shall teach you; just as I commanded them, so you shall be careful to do. Remember what Yahweh your God did to Miriam on the way when you came out of Egypt!" (Deuteronomy 24:8) As you can see, the "proof text" for this mitzvah offers no new instruction, but rather is an admonition to pay attention to the law of leprosy. The lesson, it is implied, is contained within the record of Miriam's curse. We would be remiss, then, if we neglected to check it out. It's in Numbers, Chapter 12....

"Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. So they said, 'Has Yahweh indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?' And Yahweh heard it." Note that their ulterior motive, racial bigotry, led to something totally unrelated, a grab for power disguised in fancy religious clothes. Yahweh knows our hearts, and He understands what we're up to. "(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)" This editorial insertion (probably made by Joshua) tells us that Moses was not of a mind to defend his leadership position against challenges from his brother and sister. Mo would have said, "If God wants me to serve, I'll serve; if He wants me to step aside, that's okay too."

“Suddenly Yahweh said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, ‘Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!’ So the three came out. Then Yahweh came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward.” Uh-oh. “Then He said, ‘Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, Yahweh, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of Yahweh. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?’” When Yahweh defends you, consider yourself defended.

“So the anger of Yahweh was aroused against them, and He departed. And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow.” The irony, in light of her issue with Moses’ Ethiopian wife, is hilarious. “Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper. So Aaron said to Moses, ‘Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned. Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother’s womb!’” We are left to wonder why Aaron was not stricken as well. It is evident that he knew and acknowledged that he was equally guilty, equally foolish, equally deserving of the same fate. Perhaps it was the responsibility that Yahweh had assigned to him—being the high priest, prophetic of one of the coming Messiah’s roles. After all, somebody had to plead Miriam’s case, and God had just reminded them that Moses was the only one to whom He spoke face to face. Aaron (unlike us, who since Calvary have direct access to the throne of grace) had to appeal to Moses on behalf of Miriam.

“So Moses cried out to Yahweh, saying, ‘Please heal her, O God, I pray!’” No hesitation, no recrimination. This is one of the few times a prayer is quoted in the Torah, though the word for “prayer” (Hebrew: palal) isn’t used (See Mitzvah #22). When Moses said, “I pray,” he used the word ‘na, meaning “please, I beg you,” spoken to stress the urgency or intensity of the situation. Aaron used the same word in his entreaty to Moses: “Please do not let her be as one dead....”

“Then Yahweh said to Moses, ‘If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and afterward she may be received again.’ So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey till Miriam was brought in again.” (Numbers 12:1-15) The repentant Miriam bore the marks of her sin in her body, for a while at least. Yahweh is merciful, so in response to Moses’ plea, He didn’t make it permanent (as He would the unrepentant King Uzziah). I should point out, however, that repentant or not, Miriam’s sin affected more than her: it prevented Israel from making any forward progress as long as she was afflicted. Our sins may be done in private, but they can have very public consequences.

## **Laws 581- 582 begin a new category: Politics**

### **Politics – Introduction**

It is said that in polite conversation, one should never discuss one's views on either religion or politics. In the Torah, however, these two subjects collide with gleeful alacrity. I guess if you're into small talk, Yahweh would make a terrible dinner guest.

Because God told them to remain separate from the nations, the Jews have traditionally viewed politics as a case of "us vs. them"—Israel against the rest of the world. And because a plethora of yet-to-be-fulfilled Bible passages predict their national restoration to greatness, these same Jews (those who still believe there's a God, that is) assume that He's on their side. And He is, for the long haul, but that doesn't mean He's blind to their national rebellion—even if they can't see it. Unfortunately, the Jewish sense of political destiny has become inexorably intertwined with the rabbinical view of the Torah: the idea that keeping rules and observing traditions are what binds a people to God and purges their iniquity—and that the Messiah will come to their aid only when they've proved themselves worthy.

On the other hand, the "blessings and cursings" passages in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 clearly indicate that Israel should be able to gauge their spiritual condition—their success at "observing all these commandments"—by taking notice of whether or not they are actually being blessed (and by this, I mean more than merely continuing to exist as a separate people, for God promised that to them unconditionally). Judging by the standards of scripture, the Jews are still worlds away from the center of God's will: half of them (at least) are still scattered throughout the world; they serve "gods" other than Yahweh, gods of tradition, intellect, and wealth; they are hounded and persecuted in the nations in which they are scattered, irrationally hated and ostracized; and their very national existence in their own land is threatened daily by enemies both foreign and domestic (cf. Deuteronomy 28:64-66). If the rabbis' approach is right, then why hasn't God kept His promise: "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments and perform them...you shall dwell in your land safely...I will give you peace in the land...none shall make you afraid...I will set my tabernacle among you...I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people." (Leviticus 26:3-12, highlights) Needless to say, none of that is the case today. They aren't walking in His statutes, no matter what they think.

The prophet Isaiah describes the epiphany of Israel when they finally realize how wrong they were: "We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags. We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You. For You have hidden Your face from us, and have consumed us because of our iniquities...Do not be furious, O Yahweh, nor

remember our iniquity forever.” And lest there should be any doubt that Israel is the petitioner here, he goes on to say, “Indeed, please look—we are your people. Your holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.” (Isaiah 64:6-7, 9-10)

Yahweh’s reply is like a bucket of cold water in the face. “I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ to a nation that was not called by My name.” In case you missed it, He’s talking about the gentile believers who (unlike the Jews, for the most part) were “made right with God by faith,” as Paul puts it in his epistle to the Romans, which we’ll visit in a moment. God says that these people—we who were so dumb we didn’t even know we were looking for Yahweh—gladly received salvation when it was presented to them, whereas the Jews stubbornly refused to either keep His Law or accept what (and Whom) it signified: “I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts, a people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face.” And what are they doing that so arouses Yahweh’s ire?

Religious things: “...Who sacrifice in gardens [see Leviticus 17:8-9 for instruction on what they should have been doing], and burn incense on altars of brick [Exodus 20:24-25, 30:1-6]; who sit among the graves and spend the night in the tombs [Numbers 19:16]; who eat swine’s flesh and the broth of abominable things is in their vessels [Leviticus 11:7, 41]; who say, ‘Keep to yourself [especially you pesky gentiles], do not come near me, for I am holier than you!’ These are smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all the day. Behold, it is written before Me: ‘I will not keep silence, but will repay—even repay into their bosom—your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together,’ says Yahweh.” (Isaiah 65:1-7) Each of the examples listed is a perversion of God’s Torah instructions, one way or another, just as we have seen to be the case with the majority of Maimonides’ mitzvot. The Jews’ true heart has been revealed by their lack of respect for God’s Word. While claiming to be “Torah observant,” these religious rebels actually “walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts.”

Now Paul picks up the thread. “The Gentiles have been made right with God by faith, even though they were not seeking him [just like Isaiah said]. But the Jews, who tried so hard to get right with God by keeping the law [whether the real thing or their twisted version of it—Paul is willing to give them the benefit of the doubt here], never succeeded. Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law and being good instead of by depending on faith.” (Romans 9:30-32 NLT)

It’s kind of like illegal aliens in America. Judging by their normal behavior, most of them are basing their hope (in this case, the hope of being able to stay in the country long enough to build a good, prosperous life) on “keeping the law and being good.” They work hard, obey the laws of the land (excuse the immigration laws), and try to keep their heads down, because they

don't want to make waves. Waves can get you deported. Now, not exceeding the speed limit and coming to a full and complete halt at stop signs are good things—the law requires them. But keeping these laws does nothing to legitimize an illegal alien. Even if he's keeping all the traffic rules perfectly while driving a properly registered car, it doesn't matter—he's breaking the law just by being here! In fact, until he takes advantage of the country's "grace through faith" program—taking whatever steps are mandated to become a legal resident—everything he does, in a manner of speaking, is a crime against the state. Being "good" doesn't help him if he isn't legally entitled to be here in the first place. Likewise, keeping the "Laws" of the Kingdom of Heaven is a relatively pointless exercise if we haven't become citizens of the realm.

The politically correct view would chastise Paul for being so hard on his fellow Jews. But open-mindedness concerning their errant approach would do them no practical good, and he loved his people so much, he desperately wanted to rescue them from their blunder. If there is such a thing as absolute truth, then tolerance for error is the antithesis of love. "Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is that the Jewish people might be saved. I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. For they don't understand God's way of making people right with Himself. Instead, they are clinging to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law. They won't go along with God's way. For Christ has accomplished the whole purpose of the law. That's because "the whole purpose of the Law" was to demonstrate man's need for a Savior—and God's plan to reveal Him. "All who believe in Him are made right with God..."

"For Moses wrote that the law's way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands [something none of us has ever accomplished, making "the law's way" a dead-end street if you're depending upon it to save you]. But the way of getting right with God through faith says, 'You don't need to go to heaven' (to find Christ and bring Him down to help you). And it says, 'You don't need to go to the place of the dead' (to bring Christ back to life again). Salvation that comes from trusting Christ—which is the message we preach—is already within easy reach. In fact, the Scriptures say, 'The message is close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart....'" In a nutshell, Paul is saying that we can't reach God. He reaches us. And we can't keep the Law, but the Law—the fulfillment of which is Yahshua—keeps us from death, for "the whole purpose of the Law" is summed up in that one word: Yahshua—which literally means "Yahweh is salvation."

The bottom line, then, is this: "For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus [i.e., Yahshua] is Lord and believe in your heart that God [i.e., Yahweh] raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, 'Anyone who believes

in Him will not be disappointed.’ Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They all have the same Lord, who generously gives his riches to all who ask for them. For ‘Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord [actually, it’s Yahweh here—Paul is quoting Joel 2:32] will be saved.’” (Romans 10:1-13 NLT) Believing and confessing: it’s precisely the same procedure through which Abraham was accounted righteous before God. Some things never change.

## **THE KING (581)**

Do not curse a ruler, that is, the King or the head of the College in the land of Israel. “You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.” (Exodus 22:28) Maimonides has removed one admonition and replaced it with another more to his liking. What happened to “You shall not revile God?” The Hebrew word for “revile” is qalal, meaning to take lightly, treat with contempt, dishonor, or curse. It seems to me that by tampering with God’s Torah like this, that’s precisely what the rabbis were doing to Him. Qalal is the perfect antonym of the verb we saw in the Fifth Commandment: “Honor (kabad: literally, make weighty) your father and your mother...” which goes a long way toward proving my contention that honoring our earthly father and mother is fundamentally a metaphor for taking seriously our Heavenly Father, Yahweh, and our Heavenly Mother (so to speak), His Holy Spirit.

And what about “to curse?” This is the Hebrew ’arar, which literally means “to bind (as with a spell), hem in with obstacles, render powerless to resist.” Therefore, the meaning is more like, “Do not be a curse to a ruler of your people through your resistance or rebellion.” And who, precisely is a “ruler of your people?” Though Yahweh parallels God and the ruler, implying that the ultimate “ruler” is King Yahshua, nasi, the word translated “ruler” here, is never used to denote the reigning Christ in the Old Covenant Scriptures. (Ezekiel, describing the Millennial kingdom, says “My servant David will be their prince (nasi) forever,” (Ezekiel 37:35) and most commentators interpret this as meaning the Messiah, but I am convinced that the actual resurrected David, and not King Yahshua, is being identified. We are, after all, in a post-rapture world at that point. David will be sporting his new immortal body, just like the rest of the raptured saints. See Future History, Chapter 27, for a more complete exploration of the subject.) Nasi denotes a prince, captain, chief, leader, or ruler, without regard to his degree of exaltation or worthiness. Even Gog, leader of the Islamic hordes seen invading Israel in the last days (Ezekiel 38-39), is called a nasi. (The similarity between nasi and Nazi, though delicious, is purely coincidental).



The Messiah is called a ruler in Scripture, of course, but a different word is employed. Daniel 9:25 calls Him “Messiah the prince,” using the same word translated “ruler” in this passage: “Since the day that I brought My people out of the land of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel in which to build a house, that My name might be there, nor did I choose any man to be a ruler over My people Israel. Yet I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there; and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel.” (II Chronicles 6:5-6) The word for “ruler” here is *nagid*, whose root verb means “to tell or make known, to make a matter conspicuous.” The *nagid* is thus a fundamentally different kind of ruler than a *nasi*, whose linguistic root means “to lift, carry, or take.” The *nasi* has received his leadership role; the *nagid* rules by virtue of his very nature.

So basically, this precept tells us not to actively sabotage the leader/ruler with whom God has “blessed” us (without regard to whether he’s a saint or a scoundrel). The classic example of how to do this is David’s dealing with King Saul. Though Saul repeatedly tried to kill David in fits of jealous rage, David (whose name means “love,” by the way) refused to harm “God’s anointed,” even when it would have been an easy, justifiable, and arguably prudent thing to do. Yahshua, following the same principle, didn’t trash Herod, Pilate, or Emperor Tiberius (who were doing a fine job of condemning themselves); He merely went about doing His divinely appointed job, just as we are all to do.

This is where Maimonides’ take on the whole thing derails. He and his fellow rabbis would have you believe God wants you to refrain from “being a curse” to them—a self-appointed religious elite, people who want you to submit to and honor them in obsequious obeisance. Nothing could be further from the truth. Again, Yahshua is our example. While saying nothing against the flawed political rulers that God in His wisdom saw fit to place in positions of power for His own purposes (cf. Romans 13:1-7), Yahshua lost no opportunity to lambaste the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy, ambition, and greed. Therefore, when God says, “You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people,” He is indeed saying the same thing two different ways: don’t revile Yahweh, and don’t curse the political rulers He has entrusted with your well-being, whether or not they are fulfilling their mandate. The bad news? We tend to get the governments we deserve. Ouch!

**(582)**

Appoint a king. “When you come to the land which Yahweh your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,’ you shall surely set a king over you whom Yahweh your God chooses....” (Deuteronomy 17:14-15)

Yahweh is not commanding Israel to appoint a king over themselves. Quite the contrary. Having perfect foreknowledge must be a pain sometimes. God knew Israel would someday cast His rule aside in favor of an earthly king (see I Samuel 8:6-9). This is merely instruction about what to do after they make their dumb decision. It's like saying, If and when you get it into your head to jump out of a perfectly good airplane, wear a parachute, and don't forget to pull the rip cord. Then the rabbis come along and tell their gullible audience that they all have to take up skydiving. Oy!

Of course, Maimonides didn't have much choice in the matter. If he'd properly communicated Yahweh's precept, it would have led Israel straight to the Messiah, God's Anointed—Yahshua—the One “whom Yahweh your God chooses,” a.k.a. “the Stone whom the builders rejected.” And that would have caused him and his fellow rabbis to loosen their grip on power and prestige. Can't have that, now, can we?

**(583)**

Do not appoint as ruler over Israel one who comes from non-Israelites. “...One from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.” (Deuteronomy 17:15) History is replete with foreign rulers who have come in and taken over nations not their own—with disastrous results; Napoleon and Hitler come readily to mind. The American Constitution wisely follows the Torah's precept, requiring their presidents to be “home grown.” But as you may expect, there's more to this than a formula for acquiring empathetic temporal leadership. It's a prescription for national holiness.

There are two ways to “set a king over yourself.” You can either choose him—via election, acclamation, or uncontested succession—or your adverse circumstances can place him on the throne without so much as asking your permission: nobody in Judah wanted Nebuchadnezzar as their king; he reigned strictly by right of conquest. Yahweh desired to be chosen as Israel's “King,” but as we've seen time and again, He refuses to abridge our right to choose our own destiny. He informed the newly freed Israelites, “If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:5-6) Later He told them what it would take to lose the privilege of having Him as King (see Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28). Sure enough, over the next millennium Israel did everything they'd been warned not to do. In doing so, they in effect “set foreigners over themselves, who were not their brothers.”

The ultimate reason behind the precept, of course, is that the promised Messiah would be an Israelite: “I [Yahweh] will raise up for them a Prophet like you [Moses] from among their brethren [the nation of Israel], and will put My words in His mouth, and He [Yahshua] shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.” (Deuteronomy 18:18-19) This mitzvah hasn’t run out of gas, either. Israel is about to be confronted with a false messiah the Scriptures identify as “the beast from the sea,” a metaphorical code that tells us he’s a gentile. You may know him by one of his other titles, “the Antichrist.” Israel has been warned, however. They are not to choose a foreigner as their king.

**(584)**

The King shall not acquire an excessive number of horses. “...But he [the king] shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for Yahweh has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’” (Deuteronomy 17:16) In the long run, He’s not really just talking about horses, and He’s not really talking about Egypt. The horse was the quintessential article of military hardware. A king who felt he needed lots of horses was relying on the strength of his own armed forces to defend his realm—not upon Yahweh. “Multiplying horses” is therefore a subtle form of idolatry.

And Egypt? Egypt is a Scriptural metaphor for the world that formerly enslaved us prior to our redemption—the cost of which was the death of the firstborn Son at Passover (I don’t have to spell it out, do I?). The ultimate price has already been paid to extricate us from the “Egyptian predicament.” The last thing we should want to consider is going back there—especially if our return to slavery is for no better reason than that we don’t trust Yahweh with our defense.

The lessons are clear and valid on a personal level, but we should be cognizant of the fact that Yahweh is talking about the king here—that is, the leadership we choose for ourselves. It speaks to our motivation for choosing whom we want to lead us. Do they really trust Yahweh, or are they merely fast talkers who give lip service to God while they implement worldly solutions to their constituents’ problems?

As I write these words, I have just been informed of the death of Pastor Jerry Falwell, who at least tried to provide candidates to the American electorate who would honor God. The “Moral Majority” he founded was a start, I guess. But it quickly devolved in the popular mind into the equation of a conservative political viewpoint with Protestant fundamentalist Christianity. While there are laudable points of convergence, I would hasten to point out that they are not remotely the same thing, nor are conservative politicians automatically friends of Yahweh. (“Christians”

aren't either necessarily, but let's not go there. How can you be a friend of a deity Whose name you know but refuse to use and Whose instructions you either ignore or malign?) The issue of abortion has become a very slippery slope for Christians on their way to the polls. A candidate who cheats on his wife (or her husband), abuses drugs or alcohol, lies through his teeth for personal advantage, wouldn't be caught dead in a house of worship unless there was political capital to be made, and is generally in favor of "multiplying horses from Egypt" so to speak, can nevertheless count on getting the fundamentalist Christian vote if he comes out publicly against abortion. My friends, it's okay to vote for "none of the above." Yahweh is neither the God of the lowest common denominator nor the God of the lesser of two evils.

**(585)**

The King shall not take an excessive number of wives. "...Neither shall he [the king] multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away." (Deuteronomy 17:17) We're still in the passage in which Yahweh defines the proper attitude of the king. In three areas (weaponry, wives, and wealth) the king is instructed to exercise moderation, and in each case the reasons are related: the king is to rely on Yahweh, trust Him alone, and lead his people in worshipping Him. All of the pitfalls against which the Torah warns, of course, tend to go with the territory of being king: he is the de facto Commander in Chief for his nation's armed forces, he is on some level the most attractive man in town, and taxes and tribute naturally flow his way. Yahweh is warning him not to let these things turn his head. He is to pursue Yahweh alone.

Way back in Genesis 2, we were told that God provided a wife (singular) for Adam to be "a helper neged (comparable to, corresponding to, suited for, or in the presence of) him." Looking at this from the point of view of simple logistics, one wife could fulfill this role, but multiple wives could not. The more wives a man had, the less "help" (as defined by neged) he would actually receive. So why would a man want ten wives instead of one, even if he were a king and could afford the upkeep on a harem? Well, there's the obvious (duh): the prospect of more sex. But even this logic breaks down if you factor in the human psyche: instead of having a close relationship with one woman who's just as sexually fulfilled as he is, the polygamist monarch has at best (on any given day) one satisfied woman and nine others who are seething with frustration and resentment. That's not exactly a recipe for contentment—for any of them.

But there's another reason a king might "multiply wives." Royal marriages were a time-honored way of artificially allying one nation's interests to another's. The king of Nation X isn't likely to attack Nation Y if his daughter is married to the king of that country, is he? But once again, we are reminded here of the unique nature of Israel's political structure as Yahweh intended it: they

were to be set apart from the surrounding nations—tasked with being the conduit of God’s salvation to the world. They were to be allied with Yahweh and no one else. Marriage alliances with their neighbors could only serve to dilute (or pollute) Israel’s relationship with their God.

**(586)**

He shall not accumulate an excessive quantity of gold and silver. “...Nor shall he [the king] greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.” (Deuteronomy 17:17) Same song, third verse. Wealth (even though it flows naturally to the king) is not something to be grasped at and hoarded. Rather, it is a means by which the king might bless his people. King David was so successful, he found himself swimming in loot. But the only thing he really wanted to do with it all was to build a temple honoring Yahweh. Don’t ignore those last two words in our text: “...for himself.” Being blessed materially is not a sin—king or not. But beyond the needs we all experience (of which God is quite aware—see Matthew 6:19-34) the money isn’t meant for us, for our gratification, pleasure, or pride. It’s there so that we might honor God with it, either by meeting the temporal needs of those less fortunate than ourselves or by investing in the spread of the Good News. Yes, David built himself a nice house to live in. But the bulk of his money went toward the temple. That’s where his heart was.

In a familiar anecdote, Yahshua demonstrated what our mindset toward money ought to be: “Watching for their opportunity, the leaders sent secret agents pretending to be honest men. They tried to get Jesus to say something that could be reported to the Roman governor so he would arrest Jesus. They said, ‘Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right and are not influenced by what others think. You sincerely teach the ways of God. Now tell us—is it right to pay taxes to the Roman government or not?’ He saw through their trickery and said, ‘Show me a Roman coin. Whose picture and title are stamped on it?’ ‘Caesar’s,’ they replied. ‘Well then,’ he said, ‘give to Caesar what belongs to him. But everything that belongs to God must be given to God.’ So they failed to trap him in the presence of the people. Instead, they were amazed by his answer, and they were silenced.” (Luke 20:20-26 NLT) Yahshua wasn’t particularly impressed with the might of Rome or the wealth of its emperor. He, after all, was the “only begotten Son” of the God who (as we saw above) said, “If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.” (Exodus 19:5) Yahweh owns the whole world, yet what He treasures is us—if we treasure Him.

Just for the fun of it, I took a look at a U.S. hundred dollar bill with the same mindset Yahshua did with the Roman coin. The phrase “In God we trust” is still there, which one might think would

short-circuit the exercise. But it merely begs the question: who is the God in whom we as a nation put our trust? Our national “gods” are revealed by the other “images and likenesses” printed on the bill. First, of course, there’s Ben Franklin’s half-smiling face. Americans admire him. He was inventive, resourceful, witty, and practical, one who began as a penniless immigrant but through ingenuity and hard work became one of the “great men” of his day. He was also a womanizing politician who reveled in the fawning sycophants of the salons of Paris, someone who could and did hold his grudges for decades. Franklin was not a Christian, but a deist (or at least that’s how he characterized himself). He was disgusted and appalled by the hypocritical religiosity of those he met who called themselves Christians. (Actually, I can’t say I disagree with him there).

Eleven times the bill proclaims that it’s worth one hundred dollars, but I can assure you, it’s not. I can remember a time when a hundred dollars would gas up your car, take your wife out to a nice dinner, pay the babysitter, and leave you with something left over. Now you choose between those options. And why is it like this? That’s printed on the bill as well: it’s not actually money, backed with gold or silver in a vault somewhere. No, it’s a “Federal Reserve Note,” a.k.a. funny money conjured up from debt and deceit by a private banking corporation—the Federal Reserve System—to whom our nation foolishly sold its financial soul back in 1913. On the back side of the bill is a picture of what Independence Hall used to look like. We Americans tend to worship our history and heritage, whether it’s real or not. Our independence, too, is more historic illusion than present reality.

And all over the bill, you’ll see counterfeiting countermeasures—intricate engraving, special rag paper, microprinting, watermarks, and other subtleties that defy spurious reproduction—because we Americans are obsessed with the false god called security. If I may tweak a thought from Psalm 127:1, “Unless Yahweh backs the currency, they labor in vain who earn it; unless Yahweh guards the treasury, the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board stays alert in vain.”

**(587)**

The King shall write a scroll of the Torah for himself, in addition to the one that every person should write, so that he writes two scrolls. “Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites.” (Deuteronomy 17:18) The king was to copy for his own use one scroll, not two. Maimonides is compounding an error he made way back in Mitzvah #16. There he said that every Israelite was to write a copy of the Torah. However, as the text (Deuteronomy 31:19) shows, it was only Moses and Joshua who were to write down what Moses had been preaching.

But yes, the king (when the time came that Israel had one) was instructed to write for himself a copy of the Torah. The priests were to be the keepers of the standard, the original manuscript. Note, by the way, that nothing at all was said about the “oral law” that later rabbis would hypothesize in order to prop up their perversions of the written Torah. The king was given no instruction about it because it didn’t exist.

Maimonides seems fixated on the number of copies the king was to make. Yahweh, in contrast, gives His reasons for requiring this task of the king (something that would normally have been done by a professional scribe, or scribe). “And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.” (Deuteronomy 17:19-20) The king’s Torah scroll was to be his constant companion, an oft-consulted guide, an Owner’s Manual for his life and reign. It would keep the king on the path Yahweh had set for him, benefiting the entire nation, and would prevent him from becoming prideful and arrogant—reminding him that his king was Yahweh.

We have no historical evidence that any king of Israel ever kept this precept, though one, Josiah, was so mortified with Judah’s failures when the Law was rediscovered during his reign that he tore his clothes in mourning and led his people in national repentance (see II Chronicles 34:14-33). And King David lived a life that, at least some of the time, suggests his obedience in the matter. Although he is not listed as the author of Psalm 119, the entire chapter speaks of a delight in the Torah that only intimate familiarity could bring. Some highlights: “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of Yahweh! ...Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.... I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me.... Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.... The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver.... I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life.... You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me.... Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:1, 11, 30, 54, 72, 93, 98, and 105)

## **NAZIRITES**

**(588)**

A Nazirite shall not drink wine, or anything mixed with wine which tastes like wine; and even if the wine or the mixture has turned sour, it is prohibited to him. “When either a man or woman

consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to Yahweh, he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins.” (Numbers 6:2-3) The Nazirite vow is the purest form of personal consecration prescribed in the Torah that’s available to any Israelite—that is, to one who was not born a priest or Levite (whose “consecration” was assigned to them by being born into a particular tribe or family in Israel). As we shall see, the Nazirite vow is symbolic of the life of the believer, the child of God—a voluntary, purposeful, meaningful life of separation to Yahweh. Leave it to Maimonides to suck all the life out of it by reducing it to a list of rules. This mitzvah and the next four center on the avoidance of anything grown on a grapevine. There are also prohibitions against cutting one’s hair and touching a dead body, which we’ll address in due time. But first, we should explore the vow itself, its purpose and significance.

The word we render “Nazirite” is the Hebrew noun *nazir*. It is derived from the verb *nazar*, meaning “to separate.” Depending on what preposition it’s paired with, it can mean “to keep oneself away from something,” “to abstain from something,” or “to be separated to something.” A Nazirite, then, is someone who is separated from the world and consecrated instead to Yahweh, the sign of which being his or her abstinence in several well-defined areas. Except for the abstinence component, it is quite similar to the concept of being *qodesh*, or “holy,” (literally, set-apart) a word that was supposed to describe the entire nation of Israel. One normally became a Nazirite by voluntarily taking a vow of consecration to Yahweh for a specific and limited time duration, after which his or her normal mode of life was resumed. But there are at least three instances in Scripture where the Nazirite was consecrated for a lifetime in his mother’s womb: Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist.

This was not monasticism. The Nazirite did not retreat from society, cloistered behind locked doors in order to shelter himself from the influence of the world. Nor were the signs of the Nazirite a penance to be performed in an attempt to bring himself closer to God. There was no shame in not taking a Nazirite vow, and it was not designed to give the devotee any special religious status or authority in the community (though both Samson and Samuel were Judges of Israel, and John the Baptist was the last and most privileged prophet of the Old Covenant period). Ordinarily, the Nazirite would continue his or her daily occupation, unless, of course, it conflicted with the vow. (For example, a soldier might be called upon to slay an enemy, and an undertaker prepared corpses for burial, either which would have made it impossible to keep both the vow and the occupation at the same time.)

Notice the contrast in the text: “separate himself to Yahweh” as opposed to “separate himself from wine....” What’s being pictured is a conscious, purposeful, transfer of affiliation from one



thing to another. At first glance, it would seem that the prescribed abstinence from the fruit of the vine is merely a requirement for sobriety. Though that's included (the phrase rendered "similar drink" is *sekar*—"strong drink" or liquor capable of making somebody drunk), one cannot get inebriated by nibbling raisins. There's more to it. Read on....

**(589)**

He shall not eat fresh grapes. "Neither shall he...eat fresh grapes." (Numbers 6:3) I don't care how many grapes you eat; they won't make you tipsy. We need to look at this in view of the contrast "separated to" versus "separated from." What do grapes symbolize? When the twelve spies returned from their excursion into Canaan, they brought back a cluster of grapes so big they had to carry it on a pole between two of them. The vineyard they had raided was obviously well established—it takes many years of hard work to produce a crop like that. And that's the point of the Nazirite vow: grapes represent being settled in this world, tied to it, invested in it. Now, that's not necessarily a bad thing in itself. The promised land was a gift from God, a good and bountiful place. But it was not God Himself. The Nazirite was choosing to forsake the good in favor of the perfect, if only symbolically (and temporarily). He was saying, "I am but a pilgrim in this land—my real home is in Yahweh."

**(590)**

He shall not eat dried grapes (raisins). "Neither shall he...eat raisins." (Numbers 6:3) Changing the form of the grape didn't change the fact that partaking of the fruit of the vine implied an investment in the world, an attachment to it. Thus grapes in any form symbolized for the Nazirite a state of peace, even compromise, with the world he lived in. The clearest example I can think of that demonstrates this state of affairs is Lot's life in Sodom. Though he was "oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked" (II Peter 2:7), Lot opted to stay there nevertheless, "tending his vineyard," so to speak. While his neighbors drank their share of "wine and strong drink," Lot (if I may stretch the metaphor) used his grapes to make raisins— doing what he could to make his settled life secure and impervious to the ravages of time, even if it did render his spiritual existence dry and wrinkled. Of course, merely being under a Nazirite vow didn't automatically make you perfect either. The classic example of that is Samson, who for the most part ignored his holy calling. We'll have more to say about him (and his hair) when we get to Mitzvah #594.

Nor did one have to take a Nazirite vow to live a life pleasing to God. The ultimate example of this is the life of Yahshua, who though fully consecrated to Yahweh (because He was Yahweh)

never took any vow that we know of. He drank wine (and even made it on occasion), demonstrating a connection with humanity that was essential for Him—as the rightful Lord of Heaven—to possess if He were to have empathy with our plight on earth. And He was witnessed touching a dead body (see Matthew 9:25), though the corpse of the young girl had no choice but to reawaken at his touch.

Indeed, anyone who is touched by Yahshua will find it impossible to remain dead.

Perhaps you're wondering, as I was, if there was any connection between the Hebrew root of the word we translate Nazirite (nazar, meaning "to separate") and the name of Yahshua's home town, Nazareth (Greek: Nazoraios), especially in light of Matthew's observation: "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'" (Matthew 2:23) As it turns out, the answer is no— it's a transliteration artifact. Matthew was referring to this Messianic prophecy: "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch [that's the word] shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh." (Isaiah 11:1-2) The word translated "branch" here is the Hebrew netser, which denotes a branch, bough, or limb, and by extension a shoot, scion, or root stock—in other words, one of the same kind of a succeeding generation. The "rod" here is King David, son of Jesse; the Messiah was thus prophesied to be a direct descendent of David.

It is not insignificant that we "Christians" were first called "Nazarenes," being identified with Yahshua of Nazareth. (See for example Acts 24:5.) We believers are "branches" whose root and stem is Yahshua, whether we grew there naturally (as Jews) or were grafted in (as gentiles). This state was prophesied as well in reference to the restored Israel in Christ's Millennial kingdom: "Also your people shall all be righteous. They shall inherit the land forever, the branch [netser] of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified." (Isaiah 60:21) Alas, while all believers in this life are netserim— branches of God's Messiah—it seems that few are nazar—totally separated from the world and consecrated to Yahweh.

### **(591)**

He shall not eat the kernels of the grapes. "All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin." (Numbers 6:4) Grapes aren't all juicy sweetness. They've got seeds and skin that, though necessary and functional, aren't something you'd want to eat for their own sake. We've already established the principle that a Nazirite's abstinence from the fruit of the vine is symbolic of not becoming settled in the world —of maintaining a pilgrim mentality. The idea of eating grape seeds reminds us that some people,

thoroughly rooted in this world, know nothing of its sweetness, for they know nothing of Yahshua's love. They experience nothing but its bitterness, frustration, and pain. It's why so many young Muslims can think of nothing better to do than kill as many people as they can, along with themselves. It's why devotees of Buddhism long for release from the cycle of life—achieving “nirvana,” a state of nothingness, the extinction of the soul. The Nazirite abstains not only from whatever appealing sweetness the world can offer, but also its bitterness. He is set apart to God.

**(592)**

The Nazirite shall not eat of the skins of the grapes. “All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin.” (Numbers 6:4) In the same way that the seeds of the grape aren't really what you're after when you eat one, neither is the skin. If the seeds represent the bitter core of a merely mortal life (I realize I'm stretching the metaphor to its breaking point here) then the skin represents the humdrum functionality, the boring but necessary routine of life in the world—earning a living, getting the job done, being responsible, holding it all together. The point is, if that's all there is to life, it's not much of a life. If you're going to be settled in the promised land—a land, after all, to which Yahweh has led you, you should expect to experience the “whole grape,” a little work, a little pain or disappointment at times, but more sweetness and nourishment than anything else. The Nazirite, however, sets himself apart from all that—the good and the bad—in favor of a more intense encounter with his God. He is the one of whom Isaiah lamented his absence in the passage with which we opened this chapter: the man “who stirs himself up to take hold of [Yahweh].” You've heard of extreme sports; this is extreme spirituality. It's like the difference between taking a walk in the park and climbing Mt. Everest. It's not something you'd do on a whim.

**(593)**

The Nazirite shall permit his hair to grow. “All the days of the vow of his [the Nazirite's] separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to Yahweh, he shall be holy. He shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.” (Numbers 6:5) Here Yahweh is using the hair of our head as a symbol of a significant truth. Hair is funny stuff. We can't cause it to grow (or stop it from growing), though we might like to. We can't change its rate of growth, texture, or color without tampering with it externally—cutting, curling, coloring it, or whatever. So our hair is a ready metaphor for God's provision, His work in our lives. It comes on God's terms, by His grace, and on His schedule. By abstaining from cutting his hair, the Nazirite is saying, “I will not stand in the way of Yahweh's plan; I will not

tamper with what He has provided or alter His modus operandi by imposing my will or “style” upon it.

**(594)**

The Nazirite shall not cut his hair. “All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to Yahweh, he shall be holy. He shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.” (Numbers 6:5) This isn’t really a separate mitzvah, but merely the negative restatement of the previous affirmative thought.

Maimonides is padding the list so he can come up with the magic number 613.

The Nazirite we immediately think of in regard to this precept, of course, is Samson, whose story is told in Judges 13-16. We’ve all heard how Delilah tricked him into revealing the source of his strength so she could betray him. But it’s pretty clear that not even Samson himself recognized that his

Nazirite vow had anything to do with it. Twice in the record of his life we read, “Then the Spirit of Yahweh came mightily upon him,” after which he went out and did something rude to a bunch of Philistines. Nowhere do we read of a connection between his hair and his strength until Delilah called for the barber—after she had proved her willingness to betray him on three separate occasions. The record plainly says that Samson was surprised to find his strength gone when his hair was cut off.

What had happened? I believe this is one of those rare occasions when Yahweh allowed one of the Torah’s many metaphors to get up and walk on all fours—giving substance to the symbol. Samson clearly didn’t have as much of a desire to remain as holy—set apart for God’s purposes—as his Nazirite status would have indicated. Every time he got in trouble it seems, there was a Philistine—read: enemy—woman in the picture. The Nazirite vow required (as we shall see) that he not touch any dead body. But killing a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass pretty much proves that Samson didn’t take that part of his Nazirite vow very seriously, even if they needed killin’. Furthermore, as we saw in Mitzvah #589, the Nazirite was not to eat grapes or drink wine, for this was a picture of being “settled in the land” instead of being settled in Yahweh. But Samson was apparently quite comfortable living among the enemies of his people and his God. So Yahweh tied the terms of the vow to the gifts that came with it—if his hair (symbolic of what God had provided) was cut, then his strength (the actual God-given gift) would be cut off as well. God takes His symbols seriously.

**(595)**

He shall not enter any covered structure where there is a dead body. “All the days that he [The Nazirite] separates himself to Yahweh he shall not go near a dead body.” (Numbers 6:6) Yahweh’s instruction is more general than the rabbis’ because He’s interested in the heart’s attitude, while they’re looking for a loophole. The death of the body is in itself merely a symbol of something far more tragic—the death of the soul. Just as physical death is marked by the final departure of the soul from the body (something every living creature experiences at the end of its life), spiritual death is marked by the departure of the spirit from the soul. It is this death that Adam and Eve suffered when they ate the forbidden fruit. When they sinned, God’s living Spirit left them—the neshamah, or “breath of life” that had made them “living beings” in the Garden (see Genesis 2:7) departed or was emptied, though their physical bodies did not succumb for quite some time. And it is because of this death that we, their children, must be born anew—born spiritually from above, re-indwelled with the Holy Spirit—if our souls (nephesh) are to survive their separation from the body at our physical deaths.

(See Future History, Chapter 29: “The Three Doors” for a full explanation).

The Nazirite’s separation to Yahweh reflects and foreshadows this new birth. By observing this vow, he is proclaiming in effect, “Death cannot touch the one who is consecrated to Yahweh.” In Yahweh’s world, life cannot coexist with death any more than light can coexist with darkness. Whether he knows it or not, that’s what the Nazirite is so eloquently saying by observing this part of his vow.

### **(596)**

A Nazirite shall not defile himself for any dead person (by being in the presence of the corpse). “All the days that he separates himself to Yahweh he shall not go near a dead body. He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. All the days of his separation he shall be holy to Yahweh.” (Numbers 6:6-8) Back in Mitzvah #375, we learned that priests were not to touch dead bodies, for they were set apart for the service of Yahweh and thus must not become defiled. There, however, exceptions were specified: attending to the corpse of the priest’s nearest relatives (mother, father, son, daughter, brother or virgin sister) would not render him unclean, that is, ceremonially unfit to perform his priestly duties at the Sanctuary. Not so with the Nazirite. His (or her) separation was to be complete. And if contact with a dead body was unavoidable, the Nazirite’s vow went back to square one—he had to start all over again, offering both sin and trespass offerings and cutting his hair as at the inception of the vow (see verses 9-12).

Why the difference? The same symbol (a close encounter with a corpse) symbolized slightly different things for the priest and the Nazirite. For the priest, being defiled like this signified contamination by sin (an inevitable component of the human condition) that rendered one unfit (if only temporarily) for service to God and man. Cleansing through washing in water and the passage of time were required to rectify the situation. But with the Nazirite, contact with a dead body symbolized identification with spiritual death—something that was altogether incompatible with being set apart to Yahweh, who personifies life. Contact with death, then, rendered the vow moot.

Maimonides didn't understand any of this fundamental difference between priests (prophetic of the Messiah as mediator between men and God) and Nazirites (symbolic of the redeemed believer). In his massive tome, the Mishneh Torah, he intimated that one can make himself a priest or Levite (which as we know are callings Yahweh assigned strictly on the basis of ancestry, so no one could logically aspire to a position of religious authority). The Rambam wrote: "Every person who enters this world, whose spirit moves him and his intellect instructs him to separate himself in order to stand before God, to truly serve Him, to be responsible to Him, to know Him, and to walk upright and straight in His paths as God created him; and he has freed himself from the yoke of petty human considerations that other people pursue—such a person has sanctified himself as being holy of holies, and the Lord is his share and inheritance for all time and all worlds, and he will receive in the

World to Come his proper and fulfilling reward as God has given such to the Priests and the Levites."

The man Maimonides has so eloquently described, however, is not the priest or Levite, bound by Yahweh's symbolic instructions for them; rather, he is defined by the vows of the Nazirite, for whom the Torah's defining symbols mean far more: (1) avoidance of becoming settled in this world, (2) refusal to thwart or alter the plan and provision of Yahweh, and (3) the total reversal of the spiritual death that was brought upon mankind by the fall of Adam—in other words, the second birth into Yahweh's family.

**(597)**

The Nazirite shall shave his hair when he brings his offerings at the completion of the period of his Nazariteship, or within that period if he has become defiled. "And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it." (Numbers 6:9); "Now this is the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of

the tabernacle of meeting. And he shall present his offering to Yahweh: one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as a peace offering, a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings. Then the priest shall bring them before Yahweh and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering; and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of a peace offering to Yahweh, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering. ” (Numbers 6:13-17) The Nazirite vow wasn't designed to be a lifelong endeavor. Normally, one would take the vow for a certain specific period of time, after which the devotee would resume his or her normal life spiritually refreshed. Symbols aside, it's intended to be kind of a mountain-top experience, life-changing, focusing, and renewing.

And what was to happen when the vow had been fulfilled? The Nazirite was to perform a ceremony whose every facet reflected the condition of the redeemed soul. If you'll recall the various types of sacrifice we discussed in Chapter 12, an olah (a burnt offering) of a year-old male lamb prefigured the sacrifice of God's Messiah on his behalf. The sin offering (or chata't) of a ewe lamb signified the Nazirite's indwelling by Yahweh's Holy Spirit (the "sin" being our failure to heed Her counsel). The selem—the peace offering—symbolized the Nazirite/believer's outpouring of thanks to Yahweh. The appropriate minha, or grain offering with oil, was brought as well, a reminder of Yahweh's provision. And a nesek, or drink offering (which would have normally accompanied any of these various types of offerings), stood for the blood of the Messiah Yahshua spilled for us at Calvary. Conspicuously absent from the list of sacrifices the Nazirite was to offer was the asham, or trespass offering, which ordinarily covered "mistakes." It was deemed inappropriate apparently because of the purposeful, thoughtful, and voluntary nature of the Nazirite vow. The Nazirite was to have no "Oops, my bad" moments.

"Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering." The devotee's hair, which had been allowed to grow for the entire duration of the vow, was now shorn and burned up with the peace offering—a statement that whatever God had provided was offered back to Him in thankfulness. "And the priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram, one unleavened cake from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and put them upon the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his consecrated hair, and the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before Yahweh; they are holy for the priest, together with the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering. After that the Nazirite may drink wine. This is the law of the Nazirite who vows to Yahweh the offering for his separation, and besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide; according to the vow

which he takes, so he must do according to the law of his separation.” (Numbers 6:18-21) The conclusion of the vow ends up being a party, a celebration in honor of Yahweh. The priest (again, prophetic of Yahshua in his role as mediator) is an honored guest. Since it is becoming increasingly clear that the Nazirite vow is prophetic of the life of the believer in God’s Messiah, this “post-game party,” unless I miss my guess, is prophetic of the Millennial reign of Christ. Wine is back on the menu at this point, for this is the land in which we should be settled—our promised rest, our permanent home, the final destination marking the end of all our pilgrim wanderings. It is our final and complete break with the world.

## **WAR (598)**

Those engaged in warfare shall not fear their enemies nor be panic-stricken by them during battle. “Your eyes have seen all that Yahweh your God has done to these two kings [the Amorites, Og and Sihon]; so will Yahweh do to all the kingdoms through which you pass. You must not fear them, for Yahweh your God Himself fights for you.” (Deuteronomy 3:21-22); “You shall not be terrified of them [the nations of Canaan], for Yahweh your God, the great and awesome God, is among you.” (Deuteronomy 7:21) It’s one thing to conjure up courage and charge blindly into battle. Any idiot with enough testosterone coursing through his veins can do it—which is why governments draft teenagers, not guys my age. It’s something else entirely to wage war because Yahweh has promised to fight for you. It’s important to keep things in perspective here: this is not everything Yahweh had to say on the matter: we must factor in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, where the same audience was told that if they did “not obey the voice of Yahweh your God,” then “Yahweh will cause you to be defeated before your enemies.” (Deuteronomy 28:15, 25) Their blessing in battle, then, was conditional. But in the end, it’s all of a piece: if they really knew and trusted Yahweh, they would not hesitate to carry out His directives when it came to warfare, knowing that “where God guides, God provides.”

Bear in mind that Yahweh had given the Israelites who first heard these words a specific military objective: wipe out the seven Canaanite nations from the face of the land (defined geographically in Numbers 34)—leave no trace of them, their customs, or especially their modes of religious observance. Just as there was a caveat based upon their obedience, there were also limits implied to Yahweh’s promises: He only said that the Israelites were not to be afraid when fighting the Canaanites. This wasn’t to be a blanket directive to be applied whenever and wherever a Jew felt like attacking somebody. That being said, since the rebirth of political Israel in 1948, they have indeed shown courage in battle against their Muslim antagonists, and Yahweh has obviously been fighting their wars with them and for them. By any



stretch of human military logic, the Israelis should have been wiped off the map in 1948, and if not then, then in 1955, 1967, or 1973. But the God who loves them—the One whom so few Jews know—has other ideas. It was a revelation to me as I did the research for Future History to discover that Scriptural predictions of the restoration and ascendancy of Israel outnumber any other prophetic subject by a wide margin. They have (at least) one more battle to miraculously win before Yahweh shows them the hard way how to rely on Him. Israel will finally “get it,” but it will take the most drastic of measures for Yahweh to show them who He is and what He’s done for them.

**(599)**

Anoint a special kohein to speak to the soldiers in a war. “When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for Yahweh your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. And he shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for Yahweh your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.’” (Deuteronomy 20:1-4) Maimonides’ mindset is to elevate men to positions of honor and authority (authority that could be—and was—later usurped by the rabbis). Yahweh is coming from a different place. He appointed His priesthood by selecting one family in Israel to perform a specific function: not to rule, but to be intermediaries between God and men in prophetic symbolism of the coming Messiah. “The priest” here is simply the high priest serving at the time the Israelites would commence their offensive against the Canaanites. He was to remind them of what we saw in the previous mitzvah: that Yahweh goes before them into battle—fear, therefore, is not an option. It is the height of folly (or is that arrogance?) to presume you can anoint your own priest. Only Yahweh can do that.

By the way, Joshua, Israel’s leader during the conquest of Canaan, was not a priest (i.e., a Levite from Aaron’s line)—he was an Ephraimite. But notice the prominent role priests were instructed to take in the “battle” of Jericho (Joshua 6). The point of having them march around the city blowing trumpets was to announce to Jericho (and us) that this was no mere “military” operation, just one more materialistic enterprise perpetrated by aggressive and acquisitive men. Rather, they were the heralds of Almighty God—it would be Yahweh who conquered the city, and Yahweh who received the glory of victory.