

April 17, 2010

Shabbat Shalom!

The Torah reading for this week, TAZRIA/M'TZORA, deals with a variety of priestly diagnoses made necessary by challenges to human health as well as the well-being of a home/building environment. The main focus of the portions is leprosy and other skin afflictions, but there is also a section that deals with growths on houses (the unfortunate result of too much moisture in a closed space). Rabbis, bar and bat mitzvah students and commentators see this portion from the Torah as a true challenge for drawing lessons for today.

The Israelite priests were directed to examine both people and places and make a determination about the continued presence or the eventual absence of the disease or growth. They would make their declarations with the words TAMAY (impure) and TAHOR (pure and acceptable). These terms applied mostly to biblical definitions of required sanctity, but they can just as well be used for aspects of behavior and personal attitudes to help us to express our perspectives about what is acceptable in community life.

Making a “behavioral purity” list offers an opportunity to define for ourselves what boundaries we would set for ourselves and what we could expect and accept from others. Here are possible TAMAY and TAHOR lists for Temples, groups, organizations, families and communities:

TAMAY: *dishonesty, excessive negativity, bullying, cruelty, discourtesy, disrespect, extreme impatience, name-calling, closed communication, destructive criticism.*

TAHOR: *honesty, optimism based in reality, respect, patience, courtesy, joy, open communication, appropriate praise, constructive criticism. menschlikhkeit*

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These lists are only a beginning. Each of us has our own sense of how we try to present ourselves and how we hope to treat other people in order to engender greater fellowship in our families and in our community. May we reach our own goals of creating TAHARAH – a sense of openness and purity – in our lives.

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry