

April 24, 2009

Shabbat Shalom!

Several weekly online commentaries mentioned how difficult it can be to discuss this week's Torah reading, the section in Leviticus that describes the diagnosis and treatment of diseases such as leprosy (Hansen's disease) and what may have been mildew or mold on ancient homes (Leviticus was referring to some discoloration on the wall of a house that didn't look like it belonged there!). We may not necessarily be able to learn anything in the medical realm from this passage. Still, the process of diagnosis, isolation (quarantine), and declaration of a return to health for a person suggests ways in which we can identify habits or characteristics that we might want to change in ourselves - or that citizens might hope to improve for a community or nation. This process involves...

- 1. Recognizing symptoms of what needs to be healed/changed.*
- 2. Focusing specifically on how such a change might be made, whether by consulting one's native wisdom or seeking the advice of others.*
- 3. Beginning to make the necessary changes.*
- 4. Honestly observing the results.*
- 5. Continuing the "treatment" until the "symptoms" are no longer present.*

It may be easier to apply such a process to a physical illness than to an unwanted habit, an attitude that does not lead us in a positive directions, or an old approach to conflict or policymaking that impedes communal progress and well-being. The Israelite priests saw this process of change and healing on a continuum, from "tamei/unclean" to "tahor/pure." May we find, in our lives, the paths toward the positive - to purity and real progress - that can set us all, individually and collectively, on a road to a hopeful future.

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry K.