

Shavua Tov

Weekly  Parsha

A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary
By Glenn McWilliams

Torah Portion: *Tazria*

תזריע

“Conceived”

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean.

Daber el-beney Yisra'el lemor ishah ki **tazria veyaldah zachar vetam'ah shiv'at yamim ki'mey niddat d'votah titma.**

Scripture for study:

Vayikra (Leviticus) 12:1 - 13:59

The Torah is a living Word; that is to say, the Torah is meant to be lived. As we have stated numerous times, the Torah is the self-revelation of YHWH. The Torah is therefore the revealed image of YHWH ELOHIM. Man was created to be the image of Elohim in the world.¹ With the fall of Adam and Eve this image became distorted and desecrated.² With the desecration of the image of Elohim we witness the rise of all manner of idolatry and false religion. The Torah is the means by which YHWH ELOHIM begins to restore His right image in the world. The children of Israel are called to be the bearers of this revealed image.³ It is extremely important, therefore, that we not become so lost in the study of the Torah that we fail to live the Torah. Rabbi Gamliel's son Shimon taught,

“All my days I have been raised among the Sages, and did not find anything that is beneficial for the body besides silence; and it is not study that is the main thing, but practice.”⁴

All that we learn in the Torah should be reflected in our lives. We are to DO the Torah. One practical aspect of Torah-keeping is learning to make distinctions. In our last Torah portion, Shemini,⁵ we affirmed the revelation that YHWH ELOHIM is an Elohim of distinctions. If we are to be in the image of Elohim, then we too must be a people of distinctions. Again last week we learned to make a distinction in that which we consider to be food. The Torah has taught us that not everything Elohim created is intended to be food.

The Torah teaches that we are to make a distinction between that which is *tahor* and that which is *tamei*. Understanding these distinctions is critical to our ability to keep and do the Torah. It is unfortunate that the English translators of the Bible have translated these two words as “clean” and “unclean.” The distinction of clean and unclean seems to imply that if we simply wash the dirt off of something then it will be clean. But as we have already seen, even if you give a pig a bath it is still unclean.⁶ The Torah distinctions that we are to make in our lives will make more sense if we understand the distinction between *tahor* and *tamei*.

Tahor and *tamei* are a description of two realms or states of being before the Holy One. *Tahor* (usually translated as “clean,” however, more accurately as “usable”) is a description of all that is acceptable and useful for us in being the image of Elohim. Things that are *tahor* belong to the image of Elohim. Life, love, justice, mercy, compassion, and holiness all belong to the realm of *tahor*. *Tamei* (usually translated as “unclean,” however, more accurately as “not for use”) is a description of those things that are not acceptable or useful for us as being the image of Elohim. Things that are *tamei* do not fit the image of Elohim. Death, sin, defilement, hatred, and suffering do not portray His image. Understanding these distinctions is extremely important if we are to understand the peculiar teachings of the Torah portions Tazria⁷ and Metzora.⁸ Since these two portions are largely dealing with the same issues, I am going to deal with them somewhat together. This week I am going to focus upon the very practical issue of family purity as taught in both of these portions. In next week’s teaching I will deal with the issue of *tsara’at*/leprosy and its cleansing.

As we have already stated, Torah is the living Word. As the children of Israel, we are to give life to the self-revelation of YHWH by living the Torah. Just as our Rabbi and Master, Yeshua of Nazareth, came to fulfill the Torah⁹ (giving it meaning and substance) with his life, we too are to fulfill the Torah with our lives. This calling to be the restored image of YHWH ELOHIM in the world begins right in our homes and involves even the most intimate aspects of our lives. Let me ask from the very outset for your patience, forbearance, and forgiveness if I should offend anyone with my lack of sensitivity and sensibility while discussing these very intimate aspects of our lives. To love YHWH with our whole heart, soul, and being means that we serve Him even in the most private and intimate details of our lives.

While our Torah portion this week begins with childbirth,¹⁰ I would like to begin at the beginning of the process, and therefore will begin this study with the teaching on the state of man after ejaculation. But first let us remember that as the created image of Elohim, even prior to the fall, mankind was meant to procreate.

“And Elohim said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So Elohim created man in His own image, in the image of Elohim created He him; male and female created He them. And Elohim blessed them, and Elohim said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:26-28)

The Torah teaches us that man and woman were created to become one flesh. After Eve was created from the body of Adam, she would again be joined to man.

“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.¹¹ Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (Genesis 2:23-24)

We must be careful in our thinking not to view sexual intercourse or the related emotions as sinful. We have been created as sexual beings. But as we also witness in the Torah, so too were all the animals created as sexual beings.

“And Elohim said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And Elohim created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and Elohim saw that it was good. And Elohim blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.” (Genesis 1:20-23)

So we see that the mere act of reproduction does not distinguish mankind from the rest of creation, but incorporates him into the animal realm. In many ways our sexual desires and activities simply belong to the animal nature of man. What distinguishes man from the animals is his ability to make distinctions between *tahor* and *tamei*. Learning to make these divine distinctions helps us to sanctify our lives. By making distinctions between *tahor* and *tamei* foods, we sanctify our diet. In other words, both humans and animals eat; however, what distinguishes us from the animals as well as the unbelievers is that we eat based on YHWH ELOHIM's distinctions between what is acceptable or not acceptable as food. We should eat to “satisfy the soul,” not to satisfy the lusts of the flesh.

The same may be said about sexual activities and reproduction. The animals and unbelievers all have sex and reproduce, but the children of Israel are called to live by YHWH ELOHIM's distinctions concerning sex and reproduction. By giving us the Torah the Creator has given us the ability to sanctify even these most basic aspects of life, and to distinguish ourselves from the animals and unbelievers of the world.

The act of reproduction begins with the planting or sowing of seed. Since this is something that we are created and commanded to do, it would seem that every time a husband had intercourse with his wife he would be elevated spiritually for fulfilling a mitzvah. But clearly this is not the case. The Torah teaches:

“And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him, then he shall wash all his flesh in water, and be tamei until the even. The woman also with whom man shall lie with seed of copulation, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be tamei until the even.” (Leviticus 15:16, 18)

Since the means of reproduction was designed by Elohim, it appears contradictory that man would somehow become unacceptable in the process of doing that which he was created to do. But the Torah clearly teaches that when a man's seed leaves his body it renders him *tamei*. We also see that the woman who receives the seed likewise becomes *tamei*. Now we must ask, "Why?" What is it about seed leaving a man's body that moves him from one realm to the other?

The answer is a simple one. Death belongs to the realm of *tamei*. When a man ejaculates there are millions of seeds leaving his body all at the same time. Each of these seeds carries within them the potential of life. Life belongs to the realm of *tahor*. Seed likewise belong to the realm of *tahor*. But when these millions of seeds leave the body, they die. Even if the seeds enter into a woman's body, they still die. At best, one or two of the seeds may survive to produce a child, but now within the woman's body millions of seeds are going to die. This potential life lost belongs to the realm of *tamei*, the realm of death, and is therefore not an acceptable part of the image of the living Elohim. Therefore, every time seed leaves the body, whether through intercourse, nocturnal emissions, or masturbation, the man moves from the realm of *tahor* (usefulness for being the image of Elohim) to *tamei* (not useful for being the image of Elohim).

The Torah graciously prescribes a remedy for those who do desire to return to the spiritual realm of *tahor*. After seed has left the man's body or has been received by the woman's body, the man and the woman are to wash in water. The status of *tamei* will remain with them until the evening. This means that if a husband has intercourse with his wife at noon, they would bathe themselves and be considered *tamei* until sundown. If, on the other hand, a husband and wife engaged in intercourse during the night hours, then they would wash themselves and remain in a state of *tamei* until the following sundown.

The same principle applies to the woman during her time of menstruation. Once again we must acknowledge that YHWH ELOHIM created the woman's body to function the way it does. Every twenty-eight to thirty days a healthy woman runs through a biological cycle of fertility. If during this time, however, none of the ovum she produces becomes fertilized and implanted, then the uterus lining and unused ovum are washed from her body by a flow of blood. Thus every twenty-eight to thirty days a woman moves from the realm of *tahor* to the realm of *tamei*. This transition from one realm to the other is predicated upon the realities of potential life and potential life lost. Seed and ovum belong to the realm of *tahor* and life, but their death belongs to the realm of *tamei*. During the time of menstruation the woman becomes a means of *tumah*.¹² The Torah teaches that a woman must separate herself so that she may not defile others.

"And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: every thing also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean. And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the even. And if it be on her bed, or on anything whereon she sitteth, when he toucheth it, he shall be unclean until the even. And if any man lie with her at all, and her flowers be upon him, he shall be

unclean seven days; and all the bed whereon he lieth shall be unclean.” (Leviticus 15:19-24)

Here we see that during the seven days of the woman’s period she is considered to be in the realm of *tamei*. We should also take note that during this time the woman can also transmit this state of *tamei*. We may remember that the same situation existed with the carcasses of the *tamei* animals.

“The carcasses of every beast which divideth the hoof, and is not clovenfooted, nor cheweth the cud, are unclean unto you: every one that toucheth them shall be unclean. And whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean unto you: whoso toucheth their carcase shall be unclean until the even. And he that beareth the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: they are unclean unto you.” (Leviticus 11:26-28)

“And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean; whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, whatsoever vessel it be, wherein any work is done, it must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the even; so it shall be cleansed. “ (Leviticus 11:32)

Once again we see that it is death that causes the designation of *tamei*. As long as the blood is cleansing the dead membrane and ovum from the uterus, the state of *tamei* and *tumah* continue. Since this status of *tamei* can be carried to others, the Torah teaches that there should be a time of separation. This separation is called *niddah*.¹³ The teachings of the Torah concerning this time of separation are often referred to simply as “The *Niddah* Laws.”

Let us now take a look at some of the practical matters. What is a woman in *niddah* supposed to be separate from? First and foremost it is from the sanctuary, the meat of the offerings, and holy things.¹⁴ For some believers this means that as long as one is in a state of *tamei* they will not go to synagogue, say prayers, or fellowship with others. Others refrain from sexual activity of the Sabbath and Feast days, since they are to be holy unto YHWH. Each believer will have to decide for himself on these matters.

The Torah forbids a husband from having intimate relations with his wife during the time of *niddah*. Here we must be careful to take note of some subtle distinctions. Since a woman’s menses can begin at any time of day or night, and sometimes without warning, there is always the possibility that a period can begin during the act of intercourse. If this happens, the man may inadvertently become *tamei*. If this happens the Torah teaches,

“And if any man lie with her at all, and her flowers be upon him, he shall be unclean seven days; and all the bed whereon he lieth shall be unclean.” (Leviticus 15:24)

The Torah otherwise prohibits a man from having intentional intimate relations with his wife during her time of *niddah*.

“Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness.” (Leviticus 18:19)

“And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people.” (Leviticus 20:18)

Here we see that the act of intentionally having intimate relationships during the time of menses is listed among sexual abominations and is cause for being cut off from the people. Clearly this is a prohibition requiring careful consideration on the part of the believer. On a very practical level, a woman in *niddah* should be careful concerning where she lays or sits. It may be wise for a woman to designate a specific chair as her own during this time. I also believe that the husband should find other sleeping arrangements. *Niddah* does not mean that the woman is to be cut off from family, life, and friends. It is important that the menstruating woman be conscious of the effect of her status on others.

I know that this is not an easy thing for women, especially in our Western culture. Some believers contend that because of modern feminine hygiene products, these *niddah* laws are not necessary. I disagree. I believe that this is not simply an issue of hygiene. YHWH is teaching us to make very critical distinctions in our lives. Within these distinctions are contained pieces of His self-revelation. We should be careful not to diminish from His revelation because society has discovered a more hygienic way of dealing with ELOHIM's created order. For now let us continue on with the process.

Our Torah portion begins with the teaching on conception and childbirth. Once again we are confronted with a paradoxical situation. If a woman becomes *tamei* from a failure to conceive and give birth, then one might think that giving birth or bringing life into the world must be considered *tahor*. But this is not what the Torah teaches.

“If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child, then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled. But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days.” (Leviticus 12:2-5)

Now we may ask why bringing life into the world would render a woman *tamei*. Again, the answer is a simple one. Since the time of the fall in the garden of Eden man's nature changed.¹⁵ No longer was man born in the image of Elohim, but in the image of fallen Adam.

“And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image; and called his name Seth.” (Genesis 5:3)

Thus the woman is declared *tamei* because she is bringing a soul into the world that exemplifies these mixtures and has a propensity for the *yetzer hara*,¹⁶ which can only be controlled by obedience to Torah. Sin clearly belongs to the realm or state of *tamei* and not *tahor!* During this time after the birth, the new mother is considered to be in *niddah*/separation. We should also note that the time of separation is determined by the gender of the baby; seven plus thirty-three days for a boy and fourteen plus sixty-six days for a girl. Rabbi D.Z. Hoffman teaches that the normal time of purification is the longer eighty days, but was shortened for boys so that the mother could participate in the circumcision which takes place on the eighth day.¹⁷ Once again the same practices would apply here as to regular *niddah*.

After the time of purification is concluded, the woman was to bring to the tabernacle a lamb or dove for a whole burnt offering and a dove for a sin offering.¹⁸ Each of these offerings declares a very specific teaching. The burnt offering is also called the elevation offering. This offering is a voluntary offering brought to demonstrate our desire to draw near and upward to spiritual communion with the Holy One. After having been separated by that which rendered one *tamei*, the heart longs to rise above it's animal nature and commune with YHWH ELOHIM.

The sin offering is necessary because the woman has given birth to a child that now has an inordinate propensity to the side of evil. This is the *yetzer hara*, or the evil inclination that Adam's fall brought to life. This is an important reality to comprehend. Our children are in many ways the product of our animal nature, with an inclination toward the flesh rather than toward the spirit. Thus by bringing the sin offering we are reminded that we must not let our children simply grow up like animals. Instead, we must raise our children to live the higher spiritual calling of being the image of Elohim in the world. We should also remember that by living out these teachings we teach our children that every aspect of our lives is to serve Elohim, even in our sexual life with our spouse. By keeping these teachings of separation we also demonstrate very visibly to our children the consequences of our sinfulness and impurities. By making these distinctions the women become the primary teachers of holiness and purity in the home. Every one of these teachings is an object lesson for the whole family.

One further note on this topic for your prayerful consideration is in the writings of Shaul:

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Messiah is the head of the called out ones: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the called out ones are subject unto Messiah, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Messiah also loved the called out ones, and gave himself for them; that he might sanctify and cleanse them with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious assembly, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the called out ones: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great

mystery: but I speak concerning Messiah and the called out ones. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." (Ephesians 5:22-33)

The apostle Shaul clearly teaches that marriage is a shadow picture of the relationship between Messiah and those who desire to emulate him. With this in mind we must realize that by keeping the Torah's teaching concerning *niddah*, we proclaim a truth about the body of Messiah. A small example of this is seen in our portion. We should note that it is not the blood that causes the contamination or separation. In the case of menstruation it is the death of the ovum, and in birth it is the entrance of sin into the world. In both of these instances it is the blood that is removing the death and taking away the stain of sin. Thus we see that the blood is referred to as the "blood of purification."¹⁹ So we see that a woman has the very Gospel message of the blood of Messiah taking away the sins of the world being enacted her body at least once a month. What a wonderful opportunity YHWH has given us to teach His truths!

While these Torah teachings may seem awkward or even embarrassing to us, we must recognize that they are still a part of the proclamation of Messiah. As his body we are to be without spot or blemish; thus when we are spotting or bleeding we should separate ourselves from the body so as not to give a false impression. From personal experience I can profess that during my wife's days of *niddah* I am counting the days to our being together again. It is true that "absence makes the heart grow fonder." I cannot help but think that YHWH likewise is longing and counting the days until our separation due to sin and death is ended, so that we too may again be one with Him.

While it may seem a strange and difficult pattern to adopt into one's life, I encourage both men and women to be prayerfully contemplating these divine patterns of life and to begin to do them. See whether after consciously trying to protect your home and family from defilement, you find yourself thinking about holiness more. Look for opportunities to teach your children about holiness, goodness, purity, and being the body of Messiah. Explain through your words and actions how defilement separates us from YHWH. Here we may remember the words of Yeshua when Peter refused to let the Messiah wash his feet,

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." (John 13:8)

Our times of separation and bathing are not simply a matter of hygiene. They are the Torah. If we love our Elohim we will keep His commandments and surrender to Him our whole heart, mind, and body; even its most intimate parts. In this way we truly serve Elohim with our whole being. By keeping the Torah we sanctify and set apart even our private moments and parts to the service of YHWH ELOHIM. It is this sanctifying of even our animal instincts that truly raises us above the animals to become the image of YHWH ELOHIM in the world.

I hope and pray that I have not in anyway offended any one with my choice of words or my teaching. I also hope and pray that this teaching may help to answer some of the more difficult questions concerning these very intimate matters of our lives in Yeshua.

SHAVUA TOV!

¹ Genesis 1:26-27

² Genesis 5:3

³ Exodus 19:5-6

⁴ The Shottenstein Edition, Pirkei Avos, 2:17, Mesorah Publications, Ltd. Pg. 36

⁵ Leviticus 9:1-11:47

⁶ Leviticus 11:7

⁷ Leviticus 12:1-13:59

⁸ Leviticus 14:1-15:33

⁹ Matthew 5:17

¹⁰ Leviticus 12:1ff

¹¹ The Hebrew word for man is *ish*. The Hebrew word for woman is *ishah*.

¹² *Tumah* is the Hebrew word for “defilement,” “pollution,” “contamination.”

¹³ *Niddah* is the Hebrew word for “separation.” Interestingly, the ancient Hebrew word picture is Nun, Dalet, Hey – “Life, Door, Open, or Revealed.” This picture says a lot.

¹⁴ Leviticus 7:21; 12:4

¹⁵ Psalm 51:5

¹⁶ *Yetzer hara* is the evil inclination in man that Adam’s fall brought to life.

¹⁷ The Stone Edition Chumash, Mesorah Publications, Pg. 609

¹⁸ Leviticus 12:6-8

¹⁹ Leviticus 12:4-5