

Drash on Tazria/Metzora (Leviticus 12:1–15:33)

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This week's double parashat is Tazria-Metzora, from Vayikra (Leviticus in English) the third book of the Torah, named for its opening word, "*And He called.*" Tazria means "*she conceives*" and Metzora refers to the person afflicted with the skin condition tzara'at.

Both portions are summarized quite simply: the laws of ritual purity relating to childbirth, skin diseases, garments, and houses, along with the purification rituals for those no longer so afflicted.

Yah-a-mod, Elaine bat Benjamin Moshe. Elaine will read for us Leviticus chapter 13, verses 2 and 3, in the Complete Jewish Bible.

² "If someone develops on his skin a swelling, scab or bright spot which could develop into the disease *tzara'at*, he is to be brought to Aharon the *cohen* or to one of his sons who are *cohanim*. ³ The *cohen* is to examine the sore on his skin; if the hair in the sore has turned white, and the sore appears to go deep into the skin, it is *tzara'at*, and after examining him the *cohen* is to declare him unclean.

Thank you, my bride.

These verses are typical of many others within this double portion. They define diagnostic procedures that are only authoritative when performed by a Levitical priest (a *cohen*) and the results are a verdict of either clean or unclean. Other priestly functions are stated, including presiding over restoration rituals required when clean is the verdict, most of which feature sacrificial bloodshed.

But the interesting part of these regulations is the priests have no responsibility for the *healing* associated with all these conditions. Moses came closest, perhaps, but he was still no priest, only the brother of the first and uncle of Aaron's sons. Throughout the Tenackh remarkable healings involve prophets, not priests.

On top of that, the diagnostic and sacrificial activities of the priests were tied first to the Tabernacle and later to the Temple. At the present time we are a mere 44 years away from marking two millennia of no Levitical sacrifices. Also, there has never been any apparent applicability of any of these regulations to Gentile nations. The Tenackh says nothing straight-forward about appropriate governments and religious institutions for them.

By rejecting the New Covenant Scriptures, traditional Judaism is much like the Samaritans were with only The Torah; that is. an awful lot of history has gone by without their recognition of new Scripture. Likewise, for Messianic Jews and Gentiles, almost two millennia have passed since any written Scripture was composed and subsequently accepted as canon. Also there are significant divisions about interpretation of current events against the canonical corpus; indeed, there is division about just what is

and is not canon. It is reasonable to wonder why The LORD allows this state of affairs, but it may be unreasonable to expect an answer.

Within this framework I was led to revisit my parashat Naso drash three years ago in which I explored concerns about Artificial Intelligence and how likely it was to upset the world's applecart. Three years is a very long time regarding progress in AI development especially when considering the unprecedented level of financial investment involved. Nonetheless, at this time, commonly available AI engines are still based upon Large Language Models, not Artificial General Intelligence as had been expected by many in the industry, though some now believe LLMs can achieve AGI capability. Furthermore, all commonly available LLMs still hallucinate, though much less (some now do so only ten percent of the time). While that is nowhere near good enough when the results have to be absolutely, positively correct, such as for all legacy IT processing, using current AI to check initial AI results in various ways now catches most hallucinations, leading to deployments that are deemed quite useful with increasing frequency. Thus, the promises of AI technology continue getting closer, just not as fast as had been hoped by the industry at large.

The major datum regarding the past three years of development is the rate of change. That has not been constant, it has been ever increasing and not as a straight line—the rate of change is some type of curve. We may have even reached the elbow of that curve such that the rate of change has become truly breath-taking.

This acceleration of change is nothing new under the sun, of course. In the 19th Century the transition from steam energy to electrical required many decades. Subsequent petroleum advances more quickly revolutionized transportation just as electricity revolutionized communications, in repeating ever-shorter cycles of efficiency improvements. Mankind went from the first successful airplane flight in December 1903 to landing on the Moon in July 1969, and some people experienced both these milestones as a current event. The Constitution's handling of war powers has not aged well when we consider the President has long had the authority to order the launch of nuclear weapons that will get underway within a minute of that command and capable of arriving anywhere on the planet within 30 minutes.

It is very difficult to get a clear picture of what is going on in the AI industry because of the paucity of undeniable value realized therefrom to date. For one thing, it is now seems many layoffs in corporations outside the AI industry are merely being attributed to AI when actually they are necessitated from over-hiring during the COVID years based upon market forecasts that have not panned out. Inside the AI industry, credibility and ethics of those at the pinnacle of influence are still matters of strong opinion. But the most concerning metric is, after another three years, no AI company has reached profitability, and most are still nowhere near that milestone. Venture capital is tightening.

AI advances occur in labs that the public cannot access, so we have to read reports arising from those who do have such access and evaluate possible bias while assessing against what we know to be true. A case in point was published 11 days ago about Anthropic's new Mythos AI model that they decided not to release yet because they determined it can literally break the Internet. Instead they launched Project

Glasswing involving a dozen major entities to use a limited version of the model named Mythos Preview to only scan their own systems to find and fix all the unknown security weaknesses Preview can expose. Preview's skill applies to just about every operating system and browser there is. Much more importantly, however, it can also quickly produce programs that exploit those vulnerabilities, hence the need to hold off on general release lest some users with sufficiently deep pockets seek to literally break the Internet. Or so they say. There are strong opinions concerning those representations.

So the recent scary headlines about AI wiping out white-collar jobs within a year cannot be ruled out. As I pointed out in the Naso drash, the trick remains to always be over new technology, never under, if you wish to remain employable. Consider that mass production of the typewriter created a class of workers whose primary job was to operate typewriters. The position became known as Secretary, they were organized into secretarial pools filing tens of thousands of large rooms, and in 1978 US Census data indicated it had become the most common job in 20 states. But 15 years later they were gone, replaced by personal computers with dial-up modems running spreadsheet, word-processing, and especially email software that meant most workers now needed to have their own keyboards. Revolutions like this are changing the status quo ever more rapidly, such that many workers are now expected to "reinvent" themselves every decade or so.

We could wonder how the priests reinvented themselves after the Romans took out the Temple in 70 AD. Before that, several Galilean fishermen, a tax collector, a Zealot, and many others also discovered they needed to reinvent themselves, and later a prominent disciple of Rabbi Gamaliel experienced a remarkable midcourse career reversal.

In evaluating your own reinvention needs regarding AI, consider these four common sense points about surviving today's corporate employment market as articulated by blogger Jari Matlar:

1. Document your wins. In this environment, being good at your job isn't enough. You need to be visibly valuable. Track metrics. Build relationships across departments. Make yourself costly to replace.
2. Learn AI tools, but not because they'll replace you. Learn them because they're becoming productivity multipliers. A worker who knows how to use AI tools to do their job faster cheaper better is worth keeping. A worker who doesn't is just expensive.
3. Watch the money, not the marketing. If your company announces "AI transformation" but isn't investing in training, infrastructure, or actual implementation — it's PR. Real AI initiatives involve months of pilot programs, workflow redesign, and employee training. If they skip straight to layoffs, it was never about AI.
4. Know your worth outside your current company. The harsh reality is that loyalty means nothing anymore. Companies will dress up layoffs in whatever language makes shareholders happy. Your best protection is knowing you can land somewhere else.

However, we disciples do not hold common sense as the highest wisdom. How, then, are we informed regarding current events and how to deal with them, plan for the future, and so forth? The truth is there

is no single specific path for all to follow; rather, The LORD has a single specific path for every single Believer. Some of us are unmistakably called to be preppers, for example, but it seems most are not. Some of those preppers may learn The LORD has a different reason for their preparations than they think He has. It is foolish to, independent of The LORD's point of view, do your own analysis of how things are going and then make your plans on the basis of that analysis, as if you can think of everything that could happen and when. It is equally foolish to disobey any command The LORD gives you, of course. If you are not discerning *any* personal commands from The LORD, that is a very serious red flag waving. It strongly suggests you are flying blind while suffering from unrepented disobedience and really need to ask The Spirit to show you the error of your ways.

The next parashat is *Acharei Mot-Kedoshim*, which spans Leviticus chapter 16 verse 1 through chapter 20 verse 27.