

We use cookies to ensure that we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this website without changing your cookie settings or you click "Accept" below then you are consenting to this.

ACCEPT Reject Privacy policy (<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/>)

# liberal judaism



The dynamic, cutting edge of modern Judaism

(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/>)



## News

### Parashat Tazria-Metzora 5780

#### Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi – 24 April 2020

Much has been written about 'biblical medicine' but it is debatable if there is such a thing. Certainly, it was not medicine as we know it. In the *Torah*, illness was seen as a result of wrongdoing. Healing came about by the restoration of Divine favour and was in the hands of priests and prophets. In this week's *Sidra*, we read about a skin disease called 'tzara'at', often mistranslated as 'leprosy'. The Priests were in charge of inspecting sufferers, isolating them and deciding when they could re-enter the camp.

Thankfully we have moved away from the notion of illness as a punishment. We know that disease often strikes at random, irrespective of someone's moral character. We have also developed methods of treating and controlling disease which do not depend only on faith. Modern medicine works through scientific methods, which establish whether a cure is really effective or not. That is not to say that prayers can't play a part in helping a person, but they are not to be depended on. The rabbis of the *Talmud* already showed an awareness that human beings were given authority from God to develop cures and that treatments could be evaluated rationally.

Nevertheless, there are lessons to be learnt from our *Sidra* and some of them ring true especially at this time. Although the language of impurity feels remote, the command to ensure that not only the sufferer but all their possession should be properly clean certainly feels relevant. More importantly, although sufferers are isolated, there is no stigma or criticism. They are treated humanely by the priest, who acknowledges their suffering. They are carefully looked at before they enter the camp to ensure they are no longer infectious but they are supported on re-entry. This is acknowledged by a ritual of transition. Rich or poor, the ritual allows them to recognise what they have gone through and prepares them for their return to normal life.

We have learnt in recent days that, despite the many successes of modern medicine, there is so much that is still unknown about how we can overcome this terrible virus. But we have also learnt that common humanity, kindness and compassion can help us get through. The dedication of medical and caring staff is an inspiration to all of us, as is the willingness of support workers to continue in such seemingly mundane and yet important work as collecting our rubbish. The determination of millions of people to help in whatever way they can is a testament to the good in the world. Although we cannot give a hug to someone who is bereaved or hold the hand of someone who is desperately ill, we can reach out in other ways. Like the biblical priests, we can give comfort and affirm the humanity and uniqueness of everyone who is suffering. This crisis has taught us so much and we have to learn its lessons to make a better future once it is over. We can never bring back those who have died but we can create a more compassionate society in their memory.

## RECENT COMMENTARIES

### **Parashat Balak 5780**

1 JULY 2020 – 9 TAMMUZ 5780

(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/2020/07/parashat-balak-5780/>).

### **Parashat Chukkat 5780**

24 JUNE 2020 – 2 TAMMUZ 5780

(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/2020/06/parashat-chukkat-5780/>).

### **Parashat Korach 5780**


18 JUNE 2020 – 26 SIVAN 5780

(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/2020/06/parashat-korach-5780/>).

## Parashat Shelach Lecha 5780

We use cookies to enhance your browsing experience. To improve our services, we collect and use information about your device and usage. We give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this website without changing your cookie settings or you click "Accept" below then you are consenting to this.

10 JUNE 2020, 18 SIWAN 5780  
(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/2020/06/parashat-shelach-lecha-5780/>)  
[ACCEPT](#) [Reject](#) [Privacy policy \(https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/\)](#)

 [Full Archive \(/news-views/thought-for-the-week/thought-for-the-week-archive/\)](/news-views/thought-for-the-week/thought-for-the-week-archive/)

SHARE THIS THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK



(<mailto:?>  
[subject=Thought  
for  
the  
Week  
=  
Parashat  
Tazria-  
Metzora  
5780&body=Hi,  
I  
thought  
you  
might  
enjoy  
this!  
Take  
a  
look](mailto:?subject=Thought for the Week = Parashat Tazria-Metzora 5780&body=Hi, I thought you might enjoy this! Take a look)

We use cookies to ensure that we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this website without changing your cookie settings or you click "Accept" below then you are consenting to this.

ACCEPT    Reject    Privacy policy (<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/>)

when

you

have

a

chance:

<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/>

tazria-

metzora-



5780/

---

#### Related

Pesach 5780  
(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/5780/>)

Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei  
5780  
(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/vayakhel-pekudei-5780/>)

Parashat Korach 5780  
(<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/korach-5780/>)

Tags: [Judaism \(https://www.liberaljudaism.org/tag/judaism/\)](https://www.liberaljudaism.org/tag/judaism/), [Liberal Beliefs & Practices \(https://www.liberaljudaism.org/tag/liberal-beliefs-practices/\)](https://www.liberaljudaism.org/tag/liberal-beliefs-practices/)

© Copyright 2020 Liberal Judaism

All rights reserved. [Legal & Privacy \(/legal-privacy/\)](/legal-privacy/). [Contact Us \(/contact/\)](/contact/).

[Press Enquiries \(/news-views/press-enquiries/\)](/news-views/press-enquiries/).

[Donate \(https://www.totalgiving.co.uk/donate/liberal-judaism-ulps\)](https://www.totalgiving.co.uk/donate/liberal-judaism-ulps).

Designed by [Yszi \(mailto:hawkingswebdesign@gmail.com\)](mailto:hawkingswebdesign@gmail.com).

A Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in England and Wales: 08281223

Charity Number: 1151090

Registered Office: The Montagu Centre, 21 Maple Street, London, W1T 4BE

We use cookies to ensure that we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this website without changing your cookie settings or you click "Accept" below then you are consenting to this.

**ACCEPT**    **Reject**    **Privacy policy (<https://www.liberaljudaism.org/legal-privacy/>)**