CHAPTER 12

After the previous chapter’s discussion of how food entering our bodies can make us ritually impure, the Torah now discusses how that which comes out of our bodies can do the same.

Perhaps no concept in the Torah is less accessible to the modern reader than the notion of *tum-ah*, generally translated “uncleanness” [although it has no connection to one’s physical sanitary condition] or “ritual impurity.” One contracts *tum-ah* through contact with a dead body, by being afflicted with *tzara-at* (“leprosy,” although not the disease known by that name today), or by contact with a bodily emission that touches the generation of life, such as menstrual blood, semen, or a flow from the reproductive organs. A woman who has just given birth is likewise considered ritually impure. *Tum-ah* bars one from approaching God’s sanctuary; *tzara-at* isolates one from human contact.

*Tum-ah* has unmistakable negative connotations. It is defined by what one may not do, and the Torah tells us how to be relieved of it. It need not, however, imply wrongdoing on the part of the affected person. [Admittedly, as some commentators have noted, the Torah itself provides a basis for that interpretation, when it calls for a purification offering to be part of its prescribed process of reintegration.] *Tum-ah* seems to be the result of coming in contact with an awesomely potent force that disqualifies one from approaching the sanctuary.

Proof that *tum-ah* is not a totally negative condition can be found not only in its association with such religiously affirmed activities as childbirth and caring for the dead but also from the rabbinic rule that scrolls of the biblical books convey *tum-ah* to those who touch them. [This finds its extension in the efforts we make today to avoid touching the Torah scroll with our bare hands, using a pointer when we read from it and a mantle when taking it from the Ark and returning it.]

It has been suggested that these categories of ritual impurity were a response to the anxiety triggered by death, serious illness, and the “leaking” of life-generating fluids from the body. It has been noted further that natural flows require less purification than unnatural flows, which might indicate the presence of disease.

Although *tum-ah* bars a woman from the sanctuary, we need not see that condition as negative and certainly not as punishment. There is no reason to believe that God ordained menstruation or childbirth as punishment. We might postulate that there are two types of holiness in life, two ways of encountering the divine. There is a natural holiness found in the miracles of pregnancy, birth, and recovery from illness. And there is a stipulated holiness—the arbitrary designation of certain times, places, and activities as sacred. One meets God in the experiences of birth and death, sickness and health. But they are not everyday occurrences. The person who yearns for contact with God on a regular basis must rely on sanctuaries, worship services, and prescribed rituals, all of which are holy only because we have chosen to designate them as holy. Israelite society may have seen the two types of holiness as being mutually exclusive, so that it would not be appropriate for the woman or man who had encountered the vital holiness of childbirth, menstruation, or contact with a dead body to seek the designated holiness of the sanctuary. A woman who had just given birth might feel the presence of God so strongly in that experience that she would feel no need to go to the sanctuary to find God [although we might be more comfortable with that decision being left to the new mother rather than being written into law].

We can see the notion of *tum-ah*, then, as growing out of a sense of reverence for the miraculous nature of birth, the awesome power of death, and the mysteries of illness and recuperation. That this reverence would later be contaminated by superstitious fears related to menstrual blood and contact with the dead need not detract from our efforts to understand and appreciate these chapters of biblical law.
LEVITICUS 12:2  TAZRI-A

2 Speak to the Israelite people thus: When a woman at childbirth bears a male, she shall be impure seven days; she shall be impure as at the time of her menstrual infirmity.—

3 On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.—

4 She shall remain in a state of blood purification for thirty-three days: she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until her period of purification is completed.

5 If she bears a female, she shall be impure two weeks as during her menstruation, and she shall remain in a state of blood purification for sixty-six days.

REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE NEW MOTHER (12:1–8)

2. When a woman at childbirth bears a male

Literally, “When a woman is inseminated and bears a male.”

She shall be impure as at the time of her menstrual infirmity. Not only the duration but the actual nature of the impurity resembles that of a menstruating woman (see 15:19–24).

3. Circumcision is first mandated in the context of the covenant between God and Abraham (Gen. 17:10–14).

4. Blood purification Discharges of blood that occur after the initial period of impurity are unlike menstrual blood and are not regarded as impure. until her period of purification is completed

Although the new mother was no longer impure because of discharges, she was still barred from entry into the sanctuary and from contact with consecrated objects. She had to wait until a specific period of time had elapsed before she could be declared pure.

5. The time periods are doubled for a female, but the provisions are the same.

HALakah L'ma-Aseh

12:2. as at the time of her menstrual infirmity Traditionally, the woman waits for seven days after bleeding ceases and immerses in a mikveh (ritual bath) before resuming relations. Immersion in a mikveh is not required after caesarian delivery.

12:3. On the eighth day See Gen. 17:12. The covenant of circumcision (b'rit milah) takes place on the eighth day of the child’s life. This includes Shabbat and holy days (S.A. YD 266:2), unless the child was born through caesarian section. The b'rit milah is postponed only out of consideration for the health of the child.

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6 On the completion of her period of purification, for either son or daughter, she shall bring to the priest, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a purification offering. 7 He shall offer it before the LORD and make expiation on her behalf; she shall then be pure from her flow of blood. Such are the rituals concerning her who bears a child, male or female. 8 If, however, her means do not suffice for a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a purification offering. The priest shall make expiation on her behalf, and she shall be pure.

The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

6. On the completion of her period of purification After the termination of the second period, rites are performed to readmit her into the sanctuary and into the religious life of the community.

purification offering Hebrew: hattat; needed here solely to remove impurity. All impurity, however contracted, could lead to sinfulness if not attended to, and failure to deal properly with impurity aroused God’s anger. The purification offering restored to the person the right of access to the sanctuary; and the burnt offering (olah) that followed immediately symbolized this renewed acceptability.

8. If, however, her means do not suffice The right to bring a less-expensive sacrifice is standard for a number of purifications and religious obligations. Without it, poor Israelites would have been deprived of expiation when they incurred impurity through no fault of their own.

THE PURIFICATION OF SKIN DISEASES (13:1–14:57)

Chapters 13 and 14 prescribe the role of the Israelite priesthood in diagnosing and purifying persons afflicted with a skin disease known as tzara-at. This disease also contaminated fabrics and leather as well as plastered or mud-covered building stones. The identification of biblical tzara-at with leprosy is unlikely, if by “leprosy” is meant Hansen’s disease; the symptoms presented in this chapter do not conform to the nature or the course of that disease. The term "tzara-at" probably designated a complex of various ailments. The priest combined medical and ritual procedures in safeguarding the purity of the sanctuary and of the Israelite community. Precisely why skin diseases were singled out in the priestly codes is not certain. Tzara-at was preva-
2When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling, a rash, or a discoloration, and it develops into a scaly affection on the skin of his body, it shall be reported to Aaron the priest

THE SYMPTOMS (13:1–8)
The priest’s initial problem was to determine whether the sufferer had acute tzara-at or some less serious ailment with which it might be confused, but which would heal.

2. it shall be reported to Aaron the priest The afflicted person must be brought before the priest.

CHAPTER 13
At least three things are worthy of note regarding the role of the kohen in treating leprous afflictions. First, in biblical Israel, the kohen was both the religious and the medical authority. The biblical mind saw the connection between the physical and the spiritual dimensions of illness and recovery [perhaps more clearly than we see it today]. When the kohen visited the afflicted person in isolation and examined the person’s sores, the experience of being cared for by the most prestigious person in the community must have helped generate healing powers in the sick person.

Second, the role of the kohen was not simply to diagnose the ailment [and certainly not to treat it] but to reintegrate the person into the community as soon as possible. Religion sought to include, not to isolate, the afflicted person. If the laws of leprosy were fashioned for reasons of health and contagion, Hirsch notes, they would be stringent in borderline cases. Instead, doubtful cases are deemed ritually pure.

Finally, we note that the kohen performs the ritual only after the tzara-at has disappeared, to avoid the appearance of performing a magical cure.

2. Despite a posture of sympathy for afflicted persons and a commitment to ameliorate their condition, the Sages often could not resist the temptation to ask, “What moral or spiritual failing may have caused this illness?” They see the Torah’s discussion of illness in the abstract as an opportunity to make a moral point, although they caution us that it is insensitive to tell an ailing person, “You are suffering because of your sins.” Anticipating what we recently have come to know about the unity joining the physical and the emotional dimensions of illness, they could understand illness as the result of moral as well as physical causes. Their outlook has been summarized as seeing tzara-at “not as a bodily disease but as the physical manifestation of a spiritual malaise.” The leper is isolated from human society not because of the contagious skin disease but as a punishment for antisocial behavior. Yet one of the Sages insists, “When a person is in pain, what does the divine Presence say? ‘It is My own head that aches, it is My own arm that aches’” (M Sanh. 6:5).

Playing on the linguistic similarity of the Hebrew for “leper” (m’tzora) and the Hebrew for “one who gossips” (motzi shem ra), the Sages considered leprosy to be a punishment for the sins of slander and malicious gossip (Lev. R. 16:1). They teach that gossip is like leprosy because it is highly contagious. One infected person can spread a malicious rumor to many others. They designate seven types of antisocial behavior that God punishes with tzara-at: “haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood in secret, a mind that hatches evil, feet quick to do wrong, a witness who testifies falsely, and one who incites brothers to quarrel” (citing Prov. 6:16–19). Those types of behavior share the attribute of being hard to punish in a court of law. God exacts punishment in a variety of appropriate ways: “As your rumors separated husband from wife and brother from brother, you will now be separated from all human contact.” The Midrash adduces proof texts to show that people guilty of those misdeeds were punished with leprosy. Thus Miriam is stricken after speaking ill of her brother Moses (Num. 12:10). Even Moses is afflicted for speaking ill of the Israelites, when he is summoned by God at the Burning Bush to bring the Israelites news of their impending liberation, he hesitates, saying, “They will not believe me” (Exod. 4:1). As a result, his hand becomes leprous (4:6).

Today we recognize that it is medically inaccurate and psychologically cruel to tell someone that he or she is afflicted with illness as a punishment for behavior not organically related to the illness, or that failure to heal is
or to one of his sons, the priests. The priest shall examine the affection on the skin of his body: if hair in the affected patch has turned white and the affection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous affection; when the priest sees it, he shall pronounce him impure. But if it is a white discoloration on the skin of his body which does not appear to be deeper than the skin and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall isolate the affected person for seven days. On the seventh day the priest shall examine him, and if the affection has remained unchanged in color and the disease has not spread on the skin, the priest shall isolate him for another seven days. On the seventh day the priest shall examine him again: if the affection has faded and has not spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him pure. It is a rash; he shall wash his clothes, and he shall be pure. But if the rash should spread on the skin after he has presented himself to the priest and been pronounced pure, he shall present himself again to the priest. And if the priest sees that the rash has spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him impure; it is leprosy.

When a person has a scaly affection, it shall

4. the priest shall isolate the affected person
More precisely, “he shall confine, lock up” (v’higir) the affected person. A special dwelling was used for this purpose.

6. he shall wash his clothes
Laundering one’s garments was a procedure frequently included in purification rites.

8. it is leprosy
That is, it is acute tzara-at.

CHRONIC AILMENTS (vv. 9–17)

If a person with a chronic ailment is brought to the priest, a different set of diagnostic criteria is applied. Exposed (“raw”) flesh in an infected area indicates that the old ailment never healed properly to be blamed on a lack of will. It should be noted that the Torah itself presents tzara-at as an affliction to be cured, not as a punishment to be explained. We might ask: What actions or conditions cause an individual to be isolated from the community today? And what can religious institutions do to restore that person to the community?

Salanter taught that the laws of leprosy and gossip follow immediately after the dietary laws to teach us to be as scrupulous about what comes out of our mouths as we are about what goes into them. He saw the essential sin of gossip as focusing on the faults of others rather than looking to improve ourselves. Society says to the slanderer, “If you are so good at recognizing faults, go live by yourself and discover your own faults and shortcomings.”

3. when the priest sees it
One commentator reads this as “when the priest sees him” (Meshekh Hokhmah). The priest is to examine the whole person, not only the diseased limb. He is to see what is whole and healthy about the person, not only what is afflicted.
be reported to the priest. 10 If the priest finds on
the skin a white swelling which has turned some
hair white, with a patch of undiscolored flesh
in the swelling, 11 it is chronic leprosy on the skin
of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him
impure; he need not isolate him, for he is im-
pure. 12 If the eruption spreads out over the skin
so that it covers all the skin of the affected person
from head to foot, wherever the priest can see—
if the priest sees that the eruption has
covered the whole body—he shall pronounce him
impure. The undiscolored flesh is impure; it is leprosy. 16 But if the undiscolored
flesh again turns white, he shall come to the
priest, 17 and the priest shall examine him: if the
affection has turned white, the priest shall
pronounce the affected person pure; he is pure.
18 When an inflammation appears on the skin
of one’s body and it heals, 19 and a white swelling
white is new skin that has grown over the raw area.

14. as soon as undiscolored flesh appears in it If exposed flesh reappears on it, the old in-
fection has not been covered by new skin and will
not heal properly, and the individual has chronic

TZARA-AT AS COMPLICATION (vv. 18–46)
This section deals with tzara-at that arises as a
complication, i.e., a secondary development, out
of other conditions. These symptoms are (a)
sh’hin, a term characterizing a number of condi-
tions similar to dermatitis; (b) a burn that became
infected; (c) diseases of the hair; (d) a skin condition
identified as vitiligo; and (e) ailments of the
scalp and forehead.
18. an inflammation appears on the skin . . .
and it heals The primary condition, dermatitis,
had healed, but a secondary infection had de-
veloped in the same area.
or a white discoloration streaked with red develops where the inflammation was, he shall present himself to the priest. 20 If the priest finds that it appears lower than the rest of the skin and that the hair in it has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him impure; it is a leprous affection that has broken out in the inflammation. 21 But if the priest finds that there is no white hair in it and it is not lower than the rest of the skin, and it is faded, the priest shall isolate him for seven days. 22 If it should spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him impure; it is an affection. 23 But if the discoloration remains stationary, not having spread, it is the scar of the inflammation; the priest shall pronounce him pure.

24 When the skin of one’s body sustains a burn by fire, and the patch from the burn is a discoloration, either white streaked with red, or white, the priest shall examine it. If some hair has turned white in the discoloration, which itself appears to go deeper than the skin, it is leprous that has broken out in the burn. The priest shall pronounce him impure; it is a leprous affection. 26 But if the priest finds that there is no white hair in the discoloration, and that it is not lower than the rest of the skin, and it is faded, the priest shall isolate him for seven days. 27 On the seventh day the priest shall examine him: if it has spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him impure; it is a leprous affection. 28 But if the discoloration has remained stationary, not having spread on the skin, and it is faded, it is the swelling from the burn. The priest shall pronounce him pure, for it is the scar of the burn.

29 If a man or a woman has an affection on the head or in the beard, the priest shall examine it. If some hair has turned white in the discoloration, which itself appears to go deeper than the skin, it is leprous that has broken out in the burn. The priest shall pronounce him impure; it is a leprous affection.

20. The symptomatology here is essentially the same as that applicable to the diagnosis of an initial condition of tzara-at, in verses 1–8.

24. The patch from the burn is a discoloration The exposed skin is a pink or white shiny spot.

29. The hair, which is rooted in layers of the skin, is directly affected by conditions (such as acne) that disturb the hair follicles.
amine the affection. If it appears to go deeper than the skin and there is thin yellow hair in it, the priest shall pronounce him impure; it is a scall, a scaly eruption in the hair or beard. But if the priest finds that the scall affection does not appear to go deeper than the skin, yet there is no black hair in it, the priest shall isolate the person with the scall affection for seven days. On the seventh day the priest shall examine the affection. If the scall has not spread and no yellow hair has appeared in it, and the scall does not appear to go deeper than the skin, the person with the scall shall shave himself, but without shaving the scall; the priest shall isolate him for another seven days. On the seventh day the priest shall examine the scall. If the scall has not spread on the skin, and does not appear to go deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce him pure; he shall wash his clothes, and he shall be pure. If, however, the scall should spread on the skin after he has been pronounced pure, the priest shall examine him. If the scall has spread on the skin, the priest need not look for yellow hair: he is impure. But if the scall has remained unchanged in color, and black hair has grown in it, the scall is healed; he is pure. The priest shall pronounce him pure.

30–31. This passage is describing the progressive stages of a complication whose treatment differs somewhat from acute tzara-at because of the background condition involved. Verse 30 stipulates that if both positive symptoms appear, acute tzara-at is indicated. Verse 31 states that if only one symptom occurs—the absence of black, normal hair (which is equivalent to the presence of yellow, infected hair)—quarantine is imposed, because a final determination cannot yet be made.

**thin yellow hair** The symptoms are generally similar to those of skin ailments, except that yellow, not white, hair is the discoloration to be watched for.

**scall** Hebrew: netek, which refers to the condition of hair follicles, not of skin, and describes the follicles as being “torn” from the scalp after “splitting.”

32. On the seventh day the priest shall examine the affection. Three conditions must exist for a declaration of purity to be issued at this stage: no yellow hair, no enlargement of the lesions, and no recessed lesions. To allow for clearer observation, the hair is shaved around the infected areas, leaving the areas themselves unshaven.

36. The scall has spread on the skin Any enlargement of the lesions after 14 days is sufficient to warrant a diagnosis of acute tzara-at. The priest need look no further for yellow hair.

37. The scall has remained unchanged If normal-colored hair grows back in the infected area and there has been no subsequent enlargement of the lesions, the netek infection has healed.
streaked with white discolorations, and the priest sees that the discolorations on the skin of the body are of a dull white, it is a tetter broken out on the skin; he is pure.

40 If a man loses the hair of his head and becomes bald, he is pure. 41 If he loses the hair on the front part of his head and becomes bald at the forehead, he is pure. 42 But if a white affection streaked with red appears on the bald part in the front or at the back of the head, it is a scaly eruption that is spreading over the bald part in the front or at the back of the head. 43 The priest shall examine him: if the swollen affection on the bald part in the front or at the back of his head is white streaked with red, like the leprous body skin in appearance, the man is leprous; he is impure. The priest shall pronounce him impure; he has the affection on his head.

45 As for the person with a leprous affection, his clothes shall be rent, his head shall be left bare, and he shall cover over his upper lip; and he shall call out, “Impure! Impure!” 46 He shall be impure as long as the disease is on him. Being impure, he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

38–39. These verses deal with an ailment known as bohak (brightness), identified by some medical authorities as vitiligo. It is a rash that is not acute.

40. If a man loses the hair of his head and becomes bald This section (vv. 40–44) deals with cases in which a person was bald before the outbreak of the ailment in question.

43. If the inflamed infection is whitish on the bald pate or on the forehead, the person is suffering from acute tzara-at.

45. the person with a leprous affection

Namely, one who suffers from the acute condition stated in verse 8.

his head shall be left bare Baring the head so that the hair hung loose was a customary way of shaming a person, as was covering the upper lip.

and he shall call out, “Impure!” The sufferer must warn all who approach that he is impure.

46. as long as the disease is on him Thus, an individual suffering from acute tzara-at may be banished permanently.

45. he shall call out, “Impure! Impure!” According to the Talmud, one does this not only to warn others of the contagion but also to elicit compassion and prayers on one’s behalf [BT MK 5a]. It is the responsibility of an afflicted person to recognize the illness and ask for help; and it is the responsibility of the community to offer support and prayer rather than shun or ignore the afflicted.

One commentator reads, “the impure shall call out, ‘Impure!’” That is, people tend to project their own failings onto others. A corrupt person sees corruption all around [BT Kid. 70a].
When an eruptive affection occurs in a cloth of wool or linen fabric, in the warp or in the woof of the linen or the wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin; if the affection in the cloth or the skin, in the warp or the woof, or in any article of skin, is streaky green or red, it is an eruptive affection. It shall be shown to the priest; and the priest, after examining the affection, shall isolate the affected article for seven days. On the seventh day he shall examine the affection: if the affection has spread in the cloth—whether in the warp or the woof, or in the skin, for whatever purpose the skin may be used—the affection is a malignant eruption; it is impure. The cloth—whether warp or woof in wool or linen, or any article of skin—in which the affection is found, shall be burned, for it is a malignant eruption; it shall be consumed in fire. But if the priest sees that the affection in the cloth—whether in warp or in woof, or in any article of skin—has not spread, the priest shall order the affected article washed, and he shall isolate it for another seven days. And if, after the affected article has been washed, the priest sees that the affection has not changed color and that it has not spread, it is impure. It shall be consumed in fire; it is a fret, whether on its inner side or on its outer side. But if the priest sees that the affected part, after it has been washed, is faded, he shall tear it out from the cloth or skin, whether in the warp or woof.

TZARA-AT IN FABRICS AND LEATHER (vv. 47–59)

This section deals with tzara-AT-type infections that damage fabrics and worked leather. They may have been some kinds of fungoid or sporoid infections.

47. Although most medieval and modern commentators see the eruption of tzara-AT in clothing as a natural phenomenon, a form of rot or fungus, Maimonides and Ramban see it as supernatural, something that could take place only in the Land of Israel. Because of that land's sensitivity to immorality, even the clothes one wears would bear witness to the moral decay of the person wearing them. Although the laws of tum-ah seem very foreign to us, they flow directly from the Israelites' sense that being able to come into God's presence is an irreplaceable privilege. This led them to be profoundly concerned with anything that might estrange them from the divine presence.
in the woof; 57and if it occurs again in the cloth—whether in warp or in woof—or in any article of skin, it is a wild growth; the affected article shall be consumed in fire. 58If, however, the affection disappears from the cloth—warp or woof—or from any article of skin that has been washed, it shall be washed again, and it shall be pure.

59Such is the procedure for eruptive affections of cloth, woolen or linen, in warp or in woof, or of any article of skin, for pronouncing it pure or impure.

* For the haftarah for this portion, see p. 671.
times the offerings of food due Me, as gifts of pleasing odor to Me.

3. Say to them: These are the gifts that you are to present to the Lord:

As a regular burnt offering every day, two yearling lambs without blemish. You shall offer one lamb in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. And as a grain offering, there shall be a tenth of an ephah of choice flour with a quarter of a hin of beaten oil mixed in—the regular burnt offering instituted at Mount Sinai—a gift of pleasing odor to the Lord.

7. The libation with it shall be a quarter of a hin for each lamb, to be poured in the sacred precinct as an offering of fermented drink to the Lord. The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, preparing the same grain offering and libation as in the morning—a gift of pleasing odor to the Lord.

9. On the sabbath day: two yearling lambs without blemish, together with two-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in as a grain offering, and with the proper libation—a burnt offering for every sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its libation.

DAILY OFFERING (vv. 3–8)

Called “tamid” from biblical times on, the daily offering consisted of a burnt offering of a lamb together with its grain and wine adjuncts. It was offered twice daily, morning and evening.

3. The tamid offering is to be financed by all the people, not merely by the leaders or by the rich (Neh. 10:34).

4. at twilight The time between sunset and darkness.

5. ephah See Comment to Exod. 16:36.

bin See Comment to Exod. 29:40.

beaten Hebrew: katit, “pressed in a mortar.” Hence it was pure oil.

7. with it Refers to the lamb (v. 4, as in v. 8).

SHABBAT OFFERING (vv. 9–10)

The sacrifice for a special day, called musaf in Rabbinic Hebrew, is in addition to the daily tamid and is offered immediately after it. Because the Shabbat offering is the same as the tamid, adding musaf gives Shabbat double the number of offerings of a weekday.

10. regular burnt offering Refers to the

HALAKHAH L’MA·ASEH

28:4. in the morning . . . at twilight The Sages determined that prayer, specifically the Amidah, substitutes for the communal sacrifices mandated in the Torah (BT Ber. 26b). Shaharit and Minhah (the morning and afternoon services) are thus based on the requirements articulated in this verse.

28:10. in addition to the regular burnt offering The requirement in this chapter for an additional sacrifice offered on Shabbat, festivals, and Rosh Hodesh (New Moon) is fulfilled today through the additional Amidah of Musaf recited on these days (BT Ber. 26b–27a).
11 On your new moons you shall present a burnt offering to the Lord: two bulls of the herd, one ram, and seven yearling lambs, without blemish. 12 As grain offering for each bull: three-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in. As grain offering for each ram: two-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in. 13 As grain offering for each lamb: a tenth of a measure of fine flour with oil mixed in. Such shall be the burnt offering of pleasing odor, a gift to the Lord. 14 Their libations shall be: half a hin of wine for a bull, a third of a hin for a ram, and a quarter of a hin for a lamb. That shall be the monthly burnt offering for each new moon of the year. 15 And there shall be one goat as a purification offering to the Lord, to be offered in addition to the regular burnt offering and its libation.

16 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, there shall be a passover sacrifice morning, tamid, because there could be no offering after the tamid of the evening. It should be noted that purification sacrifices are never brought on Shabbat, because intimations of human wrongdoing are not permitted on this joyous day.

ROSH HODESH, THE NEW MOON
(vv. 11–15)

In early Israel, this was an important festival celebrated by families and clans in a state of ritual purity at the local sanctuary.

14. Only here are the libation quantities specified. Because they are always the same, they need not be repeated.

burnt offering Use of this term implies the auxiliary grain offering and libation.

new moon Hebrew: hodesh, “new moon,” as in 29:6. (The word can also mean “month.”)

PASCHAL SACRIFICE AND UNLEAVENED BREAD (vv. 16–25)

The day of the paschal offering and the seven-day Festival of Unleavened Bread originally were separate and distinct holidays (cf. Lev. 23:5–6). The fact that the paschal offering is mentioned here than the sun [BT Hull. 60b]. Did the Sages here picture God apologizing for all the unfairness of life—to people who are born less healthy, gifted, or fortunate than others? Given the traditional identification of Rosh Hodesh as a woman’s festival, did the Sages imagine God expressing regret to women for having a less prominent role than men for so much of history?

HALAKHAH L’MA’ASEH
28:11, new moons The Jewish calendar is based on the cycles of the moon. An extra month (Adar I) is added 7 times in 19 years to make the lunar calendar conform to the solar year. Each Hebrew month begins with the New Moon (Rosh Hodesh); it is announced in synagogue (except for the month of Tishrei) on the preceding Shabbat, in the Blessing of the Month (Birkat Ha-Hodesh). See Comment on Exod. 12:2.

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of Pharaoh so that he would not let the Israelites go from his land.

12 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt:

12:1 This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you. 2 Speak to the whole community of Israel and say that on the tenth of this month each of them shall take a lamb to a family, a lamb to a household.

THE LAST ACT (12:1–51)

This chapter, a composite of several strands of tradition, contains a number of literary units. Each unit centers on an aspect of the Exodus events. Some of these units deal with immediate concerns, such as the last-minute preparations for the departure from Egypt; others relate to the enduring effect of the events in shaping the future course of Israel's life as a people.

REFORM OF THE CALENDAR (v. 2)

The impending Exodus is visualized as the start of a new order of life that will be dominated by the consciousness of God's active presence in history. The religious calendar of Israel is henceforth to reflect this reality by numbering the months of the year from the month of the Exodus.

This month Elsewhere it is called "the month of Abib," meaning literally "when the ears of barley ripen," referring to the spring (March and April). The month of Abib is nowadays known as Nisan.

first of the months The Hebrew months, like the days of the week in Hebrew, are called by numbers. The absence of names may be due to the desire to avoid any connection with the ancient calendars that associated days and months with heavenly bodies or pagan deities and rituals. There is evidence that at least some Israelite months once had Canaanite-Phoenician names, because the Bible refers to the months of Ziv (1 Kings 6:1), Ethanim (1 Kings 8:2), and Bul (1 Kings 6:38). The names of months now used by Jews were borrowed from the Babylonian calendar during the first exile.

THE PASCHAL OFFERING (vv. 3–13)

The laws relating to the sacrificial meal that is to take place immediately before the Exodus are now set forth in detail.

3. community of Israel The word translated as "community" (edah, from a root meaning "to come together") was the term used to designate the people Israel acting as a covenant community, in relation to worship.

tenth of this month The completion of the first 10 days of the lunar month apparently held
4But if the household is too small for a lamb, let him share one with a neighbor who dwells nearby, in proportion to the number of persons: you shall contribute for the lamb according to what each household will eat. 5Your lamb shall be without blemish, a yearling male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6You shall keep watch over it until the fourteenth day of the month to cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan.

4a household Originally, the paschal celebration was a domestic experience. Later it became a pilgrimage festival.

4. too small In Second Temple times, a minimum quorum of 10 participants was required for this ritual. The actual slaughtering of the animal was performed in the presence of no fewer than 30.

4. will eat The eating of the animal is an essential part of the ritual. By means of this sacrificial meal, kinship ties are strengthened, family and neighborly solidarity is promoted, and communion with God is established.

5. without blemish A defective gift is an insult to the recipient; hence the harmony between the one who brings the gift and God would be impaired by such a gift.

6. keep watch The animal, selected on the 10th of the month, is to be carefully protected from fear of Egyptian opinion and from an eagerness to imitate Egyptian customs, a necessary prerequisite to psychological liberation. The Sages see the lamb as a symbol of idol worship, and its public slaughter as a repudiation of idolatry. It has also been noted that in times of drastic change people need specific, action-oriented advice. This gives them a sense of control over a chaotic situation, as we see with mourning customs in the wake of a death.

The shared meal, with matzah and bitter herbs (v. 8), will become the prototype of the Pesah Seder, when we not only remember but strive to re-enact our ancestors’ deliverance from Egypt. Members of some communities come to the Seder table with sandals on their feet and a staff in their hand (v. 11), as if they were setting out on a journey to freedom.

Although we celebrate Rosh ha-Shanah, beginning a new year, in the fall, the Hebrew calendar actually begins in the spring with Nisan, the month of Pesah, as the first month. Tishrei, the month of Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur, is the seventh month [see Lev. 23:23ff.]. Some scholars see this as a compromise among ancient cultures, those who celebrated the beginning of the new year in the spring when the harsh winter rains were over and the plants and flowers re-emerged, versus those who celebrated the new year in the fall when the rains returned to replenish the land after summer’s harsh drought. We can see it as analogous to our beginning a new calendar year in January but marking our personal age on our birthday. Thus Rosh ha-Shanah is seen as the anniversary of the creation of the world, marking our shared humanity with other peoples; Pesah is the birthday of the people Israel, symbolizing our special destiny as Jews.

5. a lamb See verse 5 and Deut. 14:4. The Hebrew word sōh can mean both “a lamb” and “a kid of the goats.” In light of the fear expressed in Exod. 8:22, this act broke the sense of dread felt by the enslaved Israelites and removed the psychological barrier to liberation.

5. a family The Hebrew phrase beit avot literally means “a house of fathers” and is a subunit of a clan (the biblical mishpahah). It is made up of a husband, his wife or wives, his unmarried daughters and sons, and his married sons with their wives and unmarried children.

6. keep watch The animal, selected on the 10th of the month, is to be carefully protected

some sort of special significance now lost to us. Yom Kippur, the most sacred day in the religious calendar, falls on the 10th of the seventh month, and in ancient times this same date ushered in the jubilee year. Joshua chose the 10th of the first month to cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan.

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4. Like so much of Judaism, Pesah, although a family celebration, is not to be observed in isolation. It is an occasion for families to join with other families and create a community. More than the poor need the rich, the rich need the poor. Let those whose households are too small to absorb all the blessings that God has given them seek out their neighbors and share the bounty with them [Hirsch].
of this month; and all the assembled congregation of the Israelites shall slaughter it at twilight. 7They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they are to eat it. 8They shall eat the flesh that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. 9Do not eat any of it raw, or cooked in any way with water, but roasted—head, legs, and entrails—over the fire. 10You shall not leave any of it over until morning; if any of it is left until morning, you shall burn it.

11This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff from blemish for four days until it is slaughtered. No reason for the interval is given.

7. According to verses 13 and 23, the daubing at the entrances served to identify the houses of the Israelites, for the blood is designated “a sign.” Blood was a readily available coloring substance; it also possessed symbolic significance because it was looked on as the life essence. The lintel and doorposts form the demarcation between the sacred Israelite interior and the profane world outside.

8–9. Unlike other offerings, this one (called pesah in v.11) is roasted. Roasting may have been required here because it is the quickest means of preparation when time is short, or because it is the most effective way of extracting the blood. Deut. 16:7 instructs that this passover offering is to be boiled like a normal sacrifice. This verse witnesses the integration of the originally separate matzot festival with the Passover celebration. See Comments to Exod. 12:14–20.

bitter herbs The Hebrew word m'rorim (singular maror) probably referred originally to the kind of pungent condiment with which pastoral nomads habitually season their meals of roasted flesh. In rabbinic tradition, the plant referred to five different species of herbs, including lettuce (hassah), a vegetable known to have been cultivated in ancient Egypt.

10. A sacrificial animal is devoted in its entirety to a sacred purpose. This is so even when the offering is eaten by the worshipers and not wholly burned on the altar. The intentional act of eating at the designated time is an indispensable part of the ritual. Any leftovers retain their sacred status but may no longer be consumed and must be burned.

11. loins girded The standard dress consisted of a flowing shirtlike garment that was tightened by a sash wrapped around the waist when greater maneuverability was called for. The

7. Was the blood on the doorpost a sign that this family had the courage to defy their Egyptian neighbors and demonstrate an inner liberation? Was it perhaps a sign that this family has already suffered and should be spared? Or was it simply that this family had complied with God’s command? Could God not distinguish between Israelite and Egyptian homes? The Talmud says that once a plague has begun, it does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked [BT BK 60a]. Some means was needed to mark the homes that merited being spared.

HALAKHAH L’MA-ASEH
12:8. night On the basis of this verse, the Pesah Seider is held at night (BT Pes. 41b; 96a).

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in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly: it is a passover offering to the LORD. 12 For that night I will go through the land of Egypt and strike down every first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and I will mete out punishments to all the gods of Egypt, I the LORD. 13 And the blood on the houses where you are staying shall be a sign for you: when I see the blood I will pass over you, so that no plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 This day shall be to you one of remembrance; you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD. A passover offering The Hebrew noun "pesah" has given rise to the English adjective "paschal," used to designate the Passover lamb, the Passover holiday, and Easter. Like the word "matzah," "pesah" is assumed in this narrative to be an immediately understandable term, so it too must have a history that predates the Exodus. The etymology of the word is uncertain, although it may be related to an Akkadian root meaning "to appease." Three traditions about the meaning of the stem ḫṣ have survived: "to have compassion," "to protect," and "to skip over" (see 12:13). Strictly speaking, as noted in the Comments to verses 14–20, only the 14th day of the month can be called Pesah; but in the course of time, this term was extended to cover the entire week of the festival.

12. I will go through An example of anthropomorphism, attributing a human activity to God. Here it may be used to make His active presence in history more vividly and dramatically perceived. Despite this emphatic statement, however, tradition frequently speaks of the Angel of Death, not God, as "the destroyer."

to all the gods of Egypt God's power to take Israel out of Egypt manifests His own exclusivity, mocks the professed divinity of Pharaoh, and exposes the deities of Egypt as non-gods.

13. The first section of the chapter concludes with an assurance that no harm will befall the Israelites. This is necessary because fulfillment of the preceding instructions is fraught with peril, and the coming period of inaction will allow anxiety to surface.

The focus is on the festival of matzot, " unleavened bread." Without doubt, throughout the biblical period this celebration remained distinct from the one-day paschal rite. Indeed, the next chapter (13:6–8) establishes the laws of matzot and makes no mention of the paschal sacrifice. Lev. 23:5–6 similarly differentiates the one from the other: "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to the LORD, and on the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Feast of Unleavened Bread." Special Passovers were celebrated in the reigns of Kings Hezekiah and Josiah of Judah, both of whom were associated with major reforms (see 2 Chron. 30, 35). We are told in Ezra 6:19–22 that when the exiles returned from Babylon they "celebrated the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month," and then "joyfully celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days."

14. The topic and tone of the Torah narrative now shifts seamlessly but significantly from instructions to Moses' contemporaries to listing mitzvot to be followed by Jews in later generations—not so as to effect the Exodus but in order to remember it.
Lord throughout the ages; you shall celebrate it as an institution for all time. 15 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the very first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day to the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

16 You shall celebrate a sacred occasion on the first day, and a sacred occasion on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them; only what every person is to eat, that alone may be

remove leaven  The positive command to eat matzah is supplemented by the strict prohibition against retaining or eating leaven or leavened food throughout the entire festival. This rule is repeated below in verses 19–20 and again in 13:7. Leaven (šor) is the leavening agent known as sour-dough; “leavened food” (hametz) is food to which sourdough has been added to accelerate the rising of the dough.

shall be cut off  This punishment, known as karet, is largely confined to those who transgress in certain matters of religious worship and sexual behavior. Its nature is uncertain. Various biblical passages lead to the conclusion that karet is not a penalty enforced by the courts but a punishment left to divine execution.

16. The first and the last days of the festival possess special sanctity, but not to the same degree that those who choose not to observe it can be seen as cutting themselves off from the Jewish people.

HALAKHAH L'MA-ASEH

12:15. remove leaven  On the night before the Seider, there is a ritual search of the home (B'dikat Hametz) by candlelight. A feather and a spoon are used to collect pieces of bread or other leaven that had been hidden to stimulate the search. The next morning, any leavened product not otherwise stored and sold is disposed of, traditionally by burning (Bi'ur Hametz) (see Lev. 2:11; Deut. 16:3).

12:16. the seventh day  This last day is considered to be as holy as the first; all restrictions apply equally to both. Outside Israel, two days are traditionally observed for each day defined as a mikra kodesh (sacred occasion) in the Torah, except for Yom Kippur (because the Sages judged that fasting for two days would be too burdensome). Before the calendar was established, news of the new moon would not necessarily reach diaspora communities in time before a holiday, and so diaspora Jews observed a second day to be sure not to violate holy day prohibitions. Despite the subsequent creation of the Jewish calendar, adding a second day for each day the Torah designates as a sacred occasion remains the most widespread practice (MT Festivals 1:21). Therefore, the first and last days of Pesah are each observed for two days (for a total of eight days); the first day of Sukkot and Sh'mini Atzeret are each observed for two days (for a total of nine days); and Shavuot is observed for two days. The intermediate days of Pesah and Sukkot have some of the aspects of the festival’s first and last days and some aspects of a weekday; hence the name hol ha-mo•ed, “the ordinary part of the festival.” Rosh ha-Shanah is observed for two days even in Israel, because it occurs at the very beginning of the month and even the Jews of Jerusalem could not determine when the new moon would be sighted and the holiday would begin.
prepared for you. 17 You shall observe the [Feast of] Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your ranks out of the land of Egypt; you shall observe this day throughout the ages as an institution for all time. 18 In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. 19 No leaven shall be found in your houses for seven days. For whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a citizen of the country. 20 You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your settlements you shall eat unleavened bread.

Moses then summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go, pick out lambs for your families, and slaughter the passover offering. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the
This haftarah presents regulations that pertain largely to worship in a rebuilt Temple, with a major emphasis on offerings to make expiation for the House of Israel. For Ashk’nazim, the reading opens with the requirement of regular contributions for the Temple service to be brought by the “entire population” and prepared by the prince (45:16–17, per the interpretation that best suits the passage when excerpted as a haftarah). Their reading ends with matters of gifts to be distributed by the prince to his heirs (46:16–18). A long passage in between focuses on details of Temple purification and sacrificial offering. Among S’fardim, the reading consists solely of that passage, which also includes regulations governing entry to the inner court for the common people and for the prince, as well as offerings for fixed occasions.

A series of purification rites are to be performed in the first and the seventh months of the year (45:18–25). The rites of purification in the first month are given in special detail, together with the command that the people offer the pesah sacrifice on the 14th day of the month (of Nisan) and eat unleavened bread during the next 7 days. Correspondingly, detailed rules for the pesah sacrifice and unleavened bread are included in the special Torah reading for this Shabbat (Exod. 12:1–20). Moses delineates requirements for the inaugural pesah ceremony in Egypt, and anticipates subsequent celebrations of the festival. Ezekiel’s proclamation envisions rituals and practices in the rebuilt Temple of the future. These occasionally are at variance with the older laws.

Particularly problematic is the account of purifying the Temple in the first and the seventh months. Nothing of the sort is mentioned in the Torah. Perplexed, some rabbinic commentators have associated this purification with the altar consecration mentioned in Ezek. 43:18–26 (Rashi, Radak). They consider this rite to be a one-time event, like the tabernacle purification of old, which also occurred on the first day of the first month (see Exod. 40:2). In this way, they tried to resolve any possible conflict between this ceremony and the great day of Temple purification on Yom Kippur, 10 days after the New Year in the seventh month (Lev. 16:29). Notably, there is no reference to Yom Kippur in Ezekiel’s teaching. Also absent is any reference to the festival of Sukkot, which begins on the 15th day of the seventh month. The cultic traditions found in this haftarah also contradict specific sacrificial regulations found in the Torah (see the haftarah for Emor).

**RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE CALENDAR**

Parashat ha-Hodesh (Exod. 12:1–20) is the last of four special Torah passages added to the regular Shabbat portion in the weeks before Pesah. Specifically, it is recited on the last Shabbat of Adar—unless the forthcoming New Moon of Nisan falls on a Shabbat, in which case this haftarah is recited rather than the haftarah otherwise read whenever a New Moon falls on Shabbat. The passage gets its designation from the opening proclamation: “This month [ha-hodesh ha-zeh] shall mark for you the beginning of the months”; it contains the laws concerning a paschal offering and thus anticipates the ritual of the 14th of Nisan (see Rashi on BT Meg. 29a).

That special Torah reading and this haftarah are clearly linked. Both passages stress the pesah ceremony and the festival of unleavened bread. The Torah describes the inaugural pesah ceremony in Egypt as well as provisions for subsequent enactments; the haftarah describes the festival for the envisioned new Temple period,
stressing the formal purifications that will take place at that time (Ezek. 45:21–24). These two descriptions reflect two historical poles. The Pesah of Egypt recalls that ancient time when Israel experienced liberation from bondage and was called by God to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:6). The Pesah of the future anticipates a time when Israel will be restored to its homeland and its sacred duties. In the first ceremony, blood was smeared on the doorpost of each clan dwelling for the people’s protection (Exod. 12:13). In the complex ritual detailed by Ezekiel, blood is to be smeared on the doorpost of the Temple, among other places, for the purification of the Temple itself (Ezek. 45:19).

These thematic connections suggest some theological correlations. Daubing the entrances to the home and to the Temple with blood marks them off as two types of space. The first embodies the family, whose bonds are biologic. The family, the nuclear core of personal history and religious rite, preserves a parochial character by virtue of its intimacy and common name. The space within the Temple is communal; its rites have an official, public status. The Temple as the sanctuary of God opens its doors for collective worship, thus transcending the private histories of its worshipers. The conjunction of the two readings sharpens the distinctions between the two dwellings. How one may live in both homes—standing firm in loyalty to hearth and blood but open to the enlargement of commitments that a divine Temple dwelling symbolizes—is a question each individual must answer repeatedly.

Ezekiel 45:16-19

16The entire population shall give this offering to the prince in Israel. 17And the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the libations on festivals, new moons, sabbaths—all fixed occasions—of the House of Israel shall be the obligation of the prince; he shall prepare the purification offerings, the grain offerings, the burnt offerings, and the offerings of well-being, to make expiation for the House of Israel.

18Thus said the Lord God: On the first day of the first month, you shall take a bull of the herd without blemish, and you shall purify the Sanctuary. 19The priest shall take some of the blood of the purification offering and apply it to the doorposts of the Temple, to the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and to the doorposts of the gate of the inner court. 20You shall do the same on the seventh day of the month to purge the Temple from impurity caused by unwitting or ignorant persons.
On the fourteenth day of the first month you shall have the passover sacrifice; and during a festival of seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten. On that day, the prince shall provide a bull of purification offering on behalf of himself and of the entire population; and during the seven days of the festival, he shall provide daily—for seven days—seven bulls and seven rams, without blemish, for a burnt offering to the Lord, and one goat daily for a purification offering. He shall provide a grain offering of an ephah for each bull and an ephah for each ram, with a hin of oil to every ephah. So, too, during the festival of the seventh month, for seven days from the fifteenth day on, he shall provide the same purification offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings, and oil.

Thus said the Lord God: The gate of the inner court which faces east shall be closed on the six working days; it shall be opened on the sabbath day and it shall be opened on the day of the new moon. The prince shall enter by way of the vestibule outside the gate, and shall attend at the gatepost while the priests sacrifice his burnt offering and his offering of well-being; he shall then bow low at the threshold of the gate and depart. The gate, however, shall not be closed until evening. The common people shall worship before the Lord on sabbaths and new moons at the entrance of the same gate. The burnt offering which the prince presents to the Lord on the sabbath day shall consist of six lambs without blemish and one ram without blemish—with a grain offering of an ephah for the ram, a grain offering of as much as he wishes.

Temple service, which may explain the choice of this term (see Lev. 4:22).

21. festival of seven days Hebrew: ‏חג שבת ימים‏ (unusual formulation); literally, “a festival of weeks of days.”
for the lambs, and a *hin* of oil with every *ephah*.

6And on the day of the new moon, it shall consist of a bull of the herd without blemish, and six lambs and a ram—they shall be without blemish. 7And he shall provide a grain offering of an *ephah* for the bull, an *ephah* for the ram, and as much as he can afford for the lambs, with a *hin* of oil to every *ephah*.

8When the prince enters, he shall come in by way of the vestibule of the gate, and he shall go out the same way.

9But on the fixed occasions, when the common people come before the LORD, whoever enters by the north gate to bow low shall leave by the south gate; and whoever enters by the south gate shall leave by the north gate. They shall not go back through the gate by which they came in, but shall go out by the opposite one. 10And as for the prince, he shall enter with them when they enter and leave when they leave.

11On festivals and fixed occasions, the grain offering shall be an *ephah* for each bull, an *ephah* for each ram, and as much as he wishes for the lambs, with a *hin* of oil for every *ephah*.

12The gate that faces east shall also be opened for the prince whenever he offers a freewill offering—be it burnt offering or offering of well-being—freely offered to the LORD, so that he may offer his burnt offering or his offering of well-being just as he does on the sabbath day. Then he shall leave, and the gate shall be closed after he leaves.

13Each day you shall offer a lamb of the first year without blemish, as a daily burnt offering to the LORD; you shall offer one every morning.

14And every morning regularly you shall offer a grain offering with it: a sixth of an *ephah*, with a third of a *hin* of oil to moisten the choice flour, as a grain offering to the LORD—a law for all time. 15The lamb, the grain offering, and oil shall be presented every morning as a regular burnt offering.
16Thus said the Lord God: If the prince makes a gift to any of his sons, it shall become the latter’s inheritance; it shall pass on to his sons; it is their holding by inheritance. 17But if he makes a gift from his inheritance to any of his subjects, it shall only belong to the latter until the year of release. Then it shall revert to the prince; his inheritance must by all means pass on to his sons.

18But the prince shall not take property away from any of the people and rob them of their holdings. Only out of his own holdings shall he endow his sons, in order that My people may not be dispossessed of their holdings.

18. the prince shall not take property away
A regulation to curb such monarchical outrages as are feared in 1 Sam. 8:11–18 and documented in 1 Kings 21.