

Parashah #27

(Updated 4.02.11)

Tazria ~ תזריע ~ She Conceives

Torah: Vayikra/Leviticus 12:1~13:59

Haftarah: M'lakhim Bet/2nd Kings 4:42~5:19

B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 8:1-4; 11:2-6;
Mark 1:40-45; Luke 2:22-24; Luke 5:12-16; Luke 7:18-23

The first part of this week's Torah portion discusses things which are not commonly talked about in religious circles today. Today's leaders tend to shy away from topics having to do with bodily functions. This Torah portion addresses one of the most confusing, yet central issues in Torah: spiritual purity and defilement.

CHAPTER 12

Why does something as exciting and beautiful as the birth of a new baby result in the mother being in a state of "impurity"? All of Chapter 12, even though it is only eight verses long, addresses the issue of the purification periods required following childbirth. "These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl." (Vayikra/Leviticus 12:7b) The purification period following the birth of a girl (66 days of blood purification + 14 days of ritual impurity for a total of 80 days) was twice as many following the birth of a boy (33 days of blood purification + 7 days of ritual impurity for a total of 40 days).

My first reaction was one of "Wait a minute! That's prejudiced and shows preferential treatment!!!" However, one commentary indicated the two week period of contamination or ritual impurity should be for both the male and female child but was removed from the mother of a boy after only 7 days so she would be "clean" before the (breet m'lah) *brit milah / circumcision* celebration of her son. Another commentary indicated the reason for the doubled time for the birth of a baby girl was for blood purification and ritual impurity of the mother and the child.

Miryam/Mary and *Yosef/Joseph* observed both the Torah instructions about *brit milah* on the eighth day and about the ritual purification of the mother after 40 days as recorded in Luke 2:21-24 "On the eighth day, when it was time for his *brit milah/circumcision*, he was named Yeshua, just as the angel had said before his conception. [Note: 33 days pass] When the time came for their purification, according to the Torah of Moshe, they took him up to Yerushalayim to present him to Adonai (as it is written in the Torah of Adonai, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to Adonai." [Sh'mot/Exodus 13:2, 12, 15]) and also "to offer a sacrifice of a pair of doves or two young pigeons" (Vayikra/Leviticus 12:8), as required by the Torah of Adonai.

While many have speculated as to why the difference in the purification time periods for the birth of a boy and a girl, the Torah itself provides us with no such explanation. Though we don't know the specific reasons for these differences, the fundamental reason is clear. Boys and girls are different!

According to **verse 6**, the mother is to bring a burnt offering and a sin offering to the tent of meeting. I have often wondered why the “sin” offering? Last year, I believe HaShem and the *Ruach HaKodesh/Holy Spirit* gave me an answer which makes sense. An *Olah/burnt offering* normally, cannot be offered before a “sin” offering as is directed in **verses 6-8**. An “issue of blood” causes uncleanness but is not necessarily a “sin”. Consequently, this offering, I believe, was for “uncleanness” not for any “sin” committed (despite some of the commentaries in the Stone Edition of the Artscroll Chumash!!!).

With regard to the number 40 . . . according to Rose Crownover’s book “The Symbolic Meanings of Numbers”, Forty is the number of probations, testing, and trial. Probations means: to prove, a testing or trial, as of a person’s character, ability to meet requirements, etc. The result at the end of this period of time ended either in victory or defeat depending upon the response of the hearts of the people of HaShem.

Examples of the above include but are not limited to:

- Yeshua spent **40** days in the wilderness fasting. (**Luke 4:2**)
- It rained for **40** days and nights during the flood. (**B’resheet/Genesis 7:4**)
- Twice Moshe spent **40** days and nights on the mountain with HaShem. (**Sh’mot/Exodus 24:18 and 34:28**)
- The Israelites “spied” out the Promised Land **40** days. The result of this trial was **40** years sentence in the wilderness. (**B’midbar/Numbers 13:25 and 14:34**)
- Yehovah tested Israel **40** years in the wilderness. (**D’varim/Deuteronomy 8:2**)
- The limit on flogging was **40** lashes (**D’varim/Deuteronomy 25:3** and **2nd Corinthians 11:24**)
- Nineveh was given **40** days to repent (**Yonah/Jonah 3:4**)
- For **40** days after His resurrection, Yeshua proved His resurrection to His disciples. (**Acts 1:3**)

Before we leave this subject matter, I want to share some interesting comments the Sages have to say about *brit milah* and the number eight. When the baby boy is brought into the room, the *Mohel* (the man who does the *brit milah*) announces the words from Psalms 118, “*Baruch HaBa*” which means *Blessed is he who arrives* or *Blessed is he who comes*. In addition to its simple meaning, the numerical value of the word *haba* is 8 (hey [ח] =5 + bet [ב] =2 + aleph [א] =1 equals 8). This alludes to the *brit milah* which is performed on the eighth day. We are told the greatness of Shabbat can be seen from the fact a baby boy is not given *brit milah* until he is eight days old – until he has experienced one Shabbat. Only by passing through the holiness and rest of Shabbat, can he be ready for his *brit milah*.

Although this commandment of circumcision was given in **B' resheet/Genesis 17:10-14**, according to the Sages, it is repeated here (**12:3**) to emphasize the milah was to be performed only in the daytime and, since it further states “on the eighth day”, the child must be circumcised, even if it falls on the Sabbath.

According to the Stone Edition of the Artscroll Chumash, “nowadays, it is customary that as soon as a new mother feels well enough to leave home, she goes to a synagogue and hears ‘Kedushah’, or a similar part of the service. It is also customary after the forty or eighty days, when she would bring her offering, her husband is called to read the Torah, as a symbolic representation of the offerings described in this chapter.”

Before we leave this chapter, perhaps we should clarify the difference between ritually clean and unclean. Being ritually clean, means a person is physically fit to enter the sanctuary, participate in the Tabernacle/Temple worship services and eat of the sacrifices. A ritually unclean person cannot.

In our Westernized mindset, it is common to equate ritual uncleanness with moral deficiency or spiritual unworthiness. In the Torah, there is nothing morally deficient or spiritually unworthy about being ritually unclean. Ritual uncleanness is a normal human condition experienced by everyone. The causes of ritual uncleanness are many . . .

- Sexual relations
- Certain bodily discharges
- Childbirth
- Menstruation
- Contact with a corpse
- Contact with a leper
- Contact with the carcass of an unclean animal

. . . are all sources of ritual uncleanness.

CHAPTER 13

Tzara'at ~ Is it really leprosy?

This chapter discusses leprosy and since it isn't common in this part of the world, many think it is irrelevant and don't bother to discuss it either. However, I believe many people who are “part” of the Body of Believers have this malady and don't even know it. As a whole, we are not as well versed in Torah, G~d's Instructions, as we should be and don't recognize sin when we see it. Torah defines what sin is. If we have not read the “medical handbook” telling us what the symptoms are, then we won't recognize it.

Interestingly, in my studies, I learned the Hebrew word (tzah-rah-aht) *tzara'at* has been inaccurately translated as *leprosy*. In reality, *tzara'at* was a skin eruption similar to leprosy. It

is said this malady was caused by haughtiness, pride and from (lah-sh-on hah-rah) **lashon hara/evil speech/slander** and (reh-kee-loose) **rechilus/tale bearing or gossip**. It is believed inward or hidden sin is brought to light through the affliction of **tzara'at** so it can be brought out into the open and dealt with.

A deeper study reveals the following information . . .

- Se'ait, [say-eet] (שַׁאֵי) – a swelling, a local inflammation, a boil or a mole
- Sephat, [seh pah-aht] (סַפְּחָת) – a rash growing out of or breaking out of the skin
- Baheret, [bah-heh-reht] (בַּהֲרֵת) – a discoloration, a white shiny spot
- Nega, [neh-gah] (נִגַּע) – an affliction, a generic term for plague and of various sorts of diseases. It literally means “touch” and may signify a person so afflicted is “touched” by G~d with this affliction.
- Tzara'at, [tzah-rah-aht] (תַּזַּרְעֵת) – a scaly affliction

The person afflicted with any or all of the above conditions is referred to as a (meht-zoe-rah) metzora (מִצְרָע).

While studying, HaShem brought to mind the 9th **Mitzvot/Commandment** . . . “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor”. He said, “Westernized people tend to think it is for a courtroom setting, only. You are not to bear false witness against your neighbor, **at any time**. Gossiping about your neighbor, friend, relative, employer, employee, etc. ~ for that matter, about anyone, falls in the category of **Lashon Hara**.”

If you remember, Miryam contracted **tzara'at** for speaking **lashon hara** concerning Moshe and was required to live outside the camp.

There is a story told by Rabbi Yisrael Meir. A gentleman was talking with the Rabbi about someone & the Rabbi was afraid this would lead to Lashon Hara.

Noticing a telegram the man was in the middle of composing, Rabbi Meir said to him “I see you are extremely careful in wording your telegram. Why is this?”

“Sending a telegram is expensive; every word in the telegram is costly so I am very careful and try to minimize the words as much as possible!”

The Rabbi smiled and said, “It is exactly the same with the words we speak. Every word of **Lashon Hara/evil tongue** and **rechilus/gossip** we speak about others will cost us dearly. You should be as careful with every word you say as with every word in the telegram you wrote.”

Verses 1-17 address tzara'at on the skin in different stages and how the priest/cohen is to examine and make his declaration: clean or unclean. Verses 18-23 talk about boils and how they are to be dealt with. Then verses 24-28 tell about someone burned by fire and how it should be handled. "If a man or woman has a sore on the head or a man in his beard, then the cohen is to examine the sore . . ." (verse 29). Following are instructions to the priest. If a man is bald or his forehead is bald and a sore appears in those areas, the Cohen is to examine him (verses 40-44).

Verses 45-46 say "everyone who has tzara'at sores is to wear torn clothes and unbound hair, cover his upper lip and cry, '*Tahor! Tahor! / Unclean! Unclean!*' As long as he has sores, he will be unclean; since he is unclean, he must live in isolation; he must live outside the camp."

Finally, the (coe-ha-neem) Cohanim/Priests are given detailed instructions concerning clothing of linen, wool and leather which have been infected with tzara'at (verses 47-59).

As we progress to the Brit Hadashah, we read additional passages concerning *tzara'at*.

- **Mattityahu/Matthew 8:1-4** After Yeshua had come down from the hill, large crowds followed him. Then a man afflicted with tzara'at came, kneeled down in front of him and said, "Sir, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Yeshua reached out his hand, touched him and said, "I am willing! Be cleansed!" And at once he was cleansed from his tzara'at. Then Yeshua said to him, "See that you tell no one; but as a testimony to the people, go and let the Cohen examine you, and offer the sacrifices that Moshe commanded."
- **Luke 5:12-14** Once, when Yeshua was in one of the towns, there came a man completely covered with tzara'at. On seeing Yeshua, he fell on his face and begged him, "Sir, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Yeshua reached out his hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing! Be cleansed!" Immediately the tzara'at left him. Then Yeshua warned him not to tell anyone, "Instead, as a testimony to the people, go straight to the Cohen and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moshe commanded."
- **Luke 17:11-19** On his way to Yerushalayim, Yeshua passed along the border country between Shomron (Samaria) and the Galil (Galilee). As he entered one of the villages, ten men afflicted with tzara'at met him. They stood at a distance and called out, "Yeshua! Rabbi! Have pity on us!" On seeing them, he said, "Go and let the cohanim examine you!" And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, as soon as he noticed that he had been cleansed, returned shouting praises to G~d, and fell on his face at Yeshua's feet to thank him. Now he was from Shomron. Yeshua said, "Weren't ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found coming back to give glory to G~d except this foreigner?" And to the man from Shomron he said, "Get up, you may go; your trust has saved you."

Interestingly, in each of these, the afflicted ones were **not healed** but **cleansed** by Yeshua. In **Mattityahu/ Matthew 10:5-8** when Yeshua sent the twelve out, his instructions were to “**cleanse** those with *skin diseases/tzara’at*.

Before closing, I have to say . . . no where in this Chapter are we told what causes tzara’at. A lot of what we have been taught is from men who are good teachers but they are not Yehovah! Search as I might, I could find NO scripture which indicated what caused this affliction.

Tazria ~ תזריע ~ She Conceives
Haftarah: M’lakhim Bet/2nd Kings 4:42~5:19

Before our Haftarah gets into the issue of (tzah-rah-aht), *tzara’at*, it begins with the law of multiplication. Most of us are familiar with . . .

- “Yeshua called his talmidim to him and said, “I feel sorry for these people, because they have been with me three days, and now they have nothing to eat. I don’t want to send them away hungry, because they might collapse on the way home.” **Mattityahu/Matthew 15:32**
- “By this time, the hour was late. The talmidim (disciples) came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it is getting late. Send the people away, so that they can go and buy food for themselves in the farms and towns around here.” But he answered them, “Give them something to eat, yourselves!” They replied, “We are to go and spend thousands on bread, and give it to them to eat?” He asked them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and check.” When they had found out, they said, “Five. And two fish.” Then he ordered all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. They sat down in groups of fifty or a hundred. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, and, looking up toward heaven, made a b’rakhah (blessing). Next he broke up the loaves and began giving them to the talmidim to distribute. He also divided up the two fish among them all. They all ate as much as they wanted and they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces and fish. Those who ate the loaves numbered five thousand men.” **Mark 6:35-44**

. . . but how many of us were aware of this being “first mentioned” in (M’lah-cheem Bayt) **M’lachim Bet/2nd Kings 4:42-44**? Another example of:

***“The Renewed Covenant is in the Original Covenant concealed;
the Original Covenant is in the Renewed Covenant revealed.”***

Before we move on . . . there is great symbolism in the Mark 6 passage above.

- Five loaves of bread represent the five books of Torah which is our Bread of Life.

- Two fish represent the two houses . . . House of Judah (southern kingdom) and House of Israel (northern kingdom ~ currently dispersed throughout the world) as found in **Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah 31:31; 33:14 & 24; Yechezk'el/Ezekiel 37:16**
- The remaining twelve baskets represent the twelve tribes.

However, this is another teaching in and of itself!!!

Our Haftarah portion, **M'lachim Bet/2nd Kings 5:10-14** tells how (Nah-ah-mahn) Na'aman was cured of his disease of *tzara'at* by washing 7 times in the **Yarden/Jordan** River. Needless to say, a man of Na'aman's caliber, a military general, has really been put down! First of all, Elisha says Na'aman must come to where he is; then Elisha doesn't even bother to come speak with Na'aman face to face but rather sends a messenger to him stating he should wash in the **Yarden/Jordan** River seven times. Na'aman has a fit and rightly so!!! For those of you who have not been to Israel, let me explain . . . the River Yarden can be less than wonderful, depending on the time of the year. It can be smelly, dirty, and lacking in depth. I am SURE Na'aman was infuriated. However, when he finally made up his mind to do this simple thing Elisha had told him, he was healed! I am reminded of the scripture which tells us HaShem will use what seems foolish to a man's mind to bring His purposes forth. He does this to confound those who think they are wise and insist on thinking with their heads instead of with their hearts.

If we follow HaShem's instructions, the blessings will be endless and we will be healed. All too often, we encounter someone who acts like Na'aman or we might act like Na'aman ourselves. "Why do I have to do it G~d's way?" Whether we are Jew or non-Jew, Believer or non-believer, this type of attitude, flies in the face of our Sovereign G~d. He knows what is best for us. We need to conform our will to HaShem's will. It's all about OBEDIENCE!!! It is a heart issue. Who is G~d in your heart . . . You or Him????

At the end of the Haftarah, Elisha made it clear he wanted neither money nor recognition for these miraculous powers. His desire was to bring glory to the Name of HaShem. As a parting gesture, Na'aman requested permission to take some of Israel's earth back home with him so he could use it in his personal altar, thereby directing his devotion to the one true G~d.

Tazria ~ תזריע ~ She Conceives

**B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 8:1-4; 11:2-6;
Mark 1:40-45; Luke 2:22-24; Luke 5:12-16; Luke 7:18-23**

Mattityahu/Matthew 8:1-4 According to David Stern's Jewish New Testament Commentary, by the first century, Judaism had developed a list of signs by which the true Messiah could give as proof of his identity. Healing a leper was one of them along with casting out deaf, dumb and blind demons. In **verse 4**, Yeshua instructs the leper to "tell no one"; rather

he is to follow Torah (**Vayikra/Leviticus 14:1-32**), go and let the Cohen examine him and offer the sacrifice commanded by Moshe.

Sometimes, in our reading, we just slide over the print. Why did Yeshua instruct the leper to “tell no one”? As is true, even to this day, the Jewish people expected a Messiah who would free Israel from Rome and rule in glory, not one who would die a criminal’s death. Had Yeshua been publicly identified as the Messiah, the people would have tried to make him king then and there, which they ultimately did try to do. Had they succeeded, Yeshua would not have fulfilled **Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 53**’s prophecy of a Messiah who must suffer and die. At Yeshua’s Second Coming, He will fulfill the prophecies about the Messianic Age of world peace!

Mattityahu/Matthew 11:2-6 As I began reading these verses, I thought, that’s a strange question for **Yochanan/John** to have his talmidim ask Yeshua. After all, wasn’t it Yochanan who announced Yeshua at the **Yarden/Jordan River**, as the Lamb of G~d? (**Yochanan/John 1:29**) David Stern indicates the question “Are you the one who is to come?” was in code and would only be clear to those acquainted with his teaching. Yeshua’s answer was also in code. He refers to the prophecies in the book of **Yesha’yahu/Isaiah** of the six signs which the Messiah will give when he comes:

- He will make the blind see (**Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 29:18; 35:5**)
- Make the lame walk (**Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 35:6; 61:1**)
- Cleanse lepers (**Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 61:1**)
- Make the deaf hear (**Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 29:18; 35:5**)
- Raise the dead (implied in **Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 11:1-2** but not made specific)
- Evangelize the poor (**Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 61:1-2**)

Since he had done all these things, the message should be clear: Yeshua is the one; Yochanan need not look for another. However, Yeshua’s answer avoids mentioning the Messianic sign of “proclaiming liberty to the captives (**Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 61:1**). In His statement, “How blessed is anyone not offended by me”, Yeshua seems to be saying, even though he is the Messiah, Yochanan will not be set free, which apparently Yochanan was hoping for.

The **Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 61:1** passage specifically deals with the return of the House of Israel (northern kingdom) at the time of His second coming (**Yirme’yahu/Jeremiah 33:14** and others). This is at the end of the tribulation and just prior to the judgment.

Mark 1:40-45 This is a retelling of **Mattityahu/Matthew 8:1-4**. The “leprosy” mentioned here and in many translations is most likely not the same as Hansen’s Disease as leprosy is called today. The request “make me clean” was not only to be free of the repulsive skin disease but to be ritually **clean**, (tah-hor) **tahor** in Hebrew. Being ritually unclean, caused one to be separated from their community and their family.

Luke 2:22-24 These two verses record the observance of two Hebrew laws; (peed-yown hah-bayn) *pidyon-haben/redemption of the first born* and the purification of a mother after childbirth. The ceremony of redeeming the firstborn male son reminds the Hebrew people of their redemption from slavery in Egypt (**Sh'mot/Exodus 13:2-16**) and of avoiding the last of the Ten Plagues. The purification of a mother is described in **Vayikra/Leviticus 12:1-8**. From Luke's quotation in **verse 24**, we learn Yeshua's parents, *Yosef/Joseph* and *Miryam/Miriam / Mary* were relatively poor, so they offered a pair of doves or two young pigeons

Luke 5:12-16 These verses are a retelling of **Mark 1:40-45** and **Mattityahu/Matthew 8:1-4**. I didn't find any additional commentary which shed light on these verses.

Luke 7:18-23 Here, too, is Luke's version of **Mattityahu/Matthew 11:2-6** with no additional information.

The corresponding Psalm for this Torah portion is: Psalm 106

Next Week: Parashah #28

Metzora ~ מצרע ~ Person Afflicted With Tzara'at

Torah: Vayikra/Leviticus 14:1~15:33

Haftarah: M'lakhim Bet / 2nd Kings 7:3-20

B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 9:20-26;

Mark 5:24b-34; Luke 8:42b-48; Ivrim/Hebrews 13:4

Who fills his mind with Torah clears it of fear and folly.

Rabbi Chanina Sgan HaKohanim

**Organize yourselves into classes for the study of Torah,
since it can best be acquired in association with others.**

Talmud: Berkot 63b

Shavuah tov (have a good week)!!!