

Parashah #28

(Updated for 4.09.11)

Metzora ~ **מִצְרָע** ~ 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

This portion continues with the purification process for the (Meht-zore-ah) *Metzora/one afflicted with tzara'at* and ends with the purification process for discharges from the flesh.

In one commentary, I found an interesting tidbit concerning the word metzora. The Sages taught the word metzora was derived from a combination of the Hebrew word (moat-zee) *motzi* [מִצֵּי], which means *wellspring* or *source*, and the Hebrew word (rah) *ra* [רָע] which means *evil*. Putting those two words together would indicate *metzora* means a *wellspring or source of evil*. As we learned earlier, the word metzora comes from the Hebrew word (zah-rah-aht) *tzara'at* which has been translated as *leprosy*. However, the Rabbis moral interpretation of the *wellspring of evil* was meant to be a reminder. What is the source the evil springs from? It is the tongue!!! Based on this interpretation, anyone who speaks evil is a spiritual metzora! *Ya'akov/James*, the brother of Yeshua, was very well versed with this interpretation, I am sure! He alludes to it when he compares the tongue to a wellspring in *Ya'akov/James 3:10-11*, “Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing! Brothers, it isn't right for things to be this way. A spring doesn't send both fresh and bitter water from the same opening, does it?”

CHAPTER 14

On the day of his purification, the Metzora is taken to the *Cohen/priest*, according to *Vayikra/Leviticus 14:2*. Then, they go outside the camp for the examination to take place. What I don't understand is this: I thought the Metzora was to stay outside the camp anyway. So why was he/she brought to the Cohen and then they went outside the camp? I couldn't, for the life of me, find an answer. Do you know? I guess it's just another one of those questions I can ask when I see my Father (pah-neem l' pah-neem) *panim l'panim/face to face*.

Needless to say, after the initial ritual with the birds, cedar-wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop leaves, it's a rather lengthy purification process which includes living outside his tent for 7 days, then shaving off ALL his hair, including beard and eyebrows!, of all things!!! Then on the 8th day there is the purification offering, which is no small ordeal.

As I reflected on the purification ritual, I thought of the different ways this process alludes to Yeshua, our Messiah.

- The scarlet wool reminded me of the passage which says, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.” (*Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 1:18*) Wool dyed red, to me, is symbolic of the sacrificial “blood of the lamb”.
- Hyssop was used to apply the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of the houses in (mitzrah-yeem) *Mitzraim/Egypt* during the first *Pesach/Passover*. This reminds me of the Passover of Yeshua’s crucifixion, when the hyssop branch with the sponge of sour wine was lifted to the Master’s mouth.
- The bird killed in the ritual reminds me of the sin offering of *HaMashiach/the Messiah* and . . .
- The mixture of living water and blood reminds me of the blood and water which flowed from Yeshua’s side when He was pierced by the Roman soldier’s spear. (*Yochanan/John 19:34*).
- The bird which flies away bearing the uncleanness of the metzora, points to Yeshua, who took our infirmities, our sins and uncleanness and carried them away. To me, it’s exciting to see shadows of our Messiah in the Original Covenant!!!

“Then the Cohen will order two living clean birds be taken for the one to be purified, along with cedar-wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop leaves.” (*Vayikra/Leviticus 14:4*) It’s interesting these two, very different, plants are used in this process. Each tree couldn’t be more different! However, there is a lesson here for all of us.

Hyssop grows in tufts of stems no larger than a foot and a half. *Sh’lomo/Solomon* spoke of trees, from the cedar which is in Lebanon even to the hyssop which grows on the wall. (*M’lakim Alef/1st Kings 4:33*) This puts the hyssop on the opposite end of the spectrum from the cedar. Rashi explains the hyssop plant was used in the purification from tzara’at because it is a lowly, humble plant and reminds the penitent gossip he should have a lowly, humble spirit. So why did the cleansing require cedar wood?

The Sages believed the purification ceremony used cedar-wood because the cedar, as a tall and lofty tree, represents the haughty spirit. The metaphor of a cedar as a haughty person comes from the words of the prophet *Yesha’yahu/Isaiah*. “Yes, Adonai Tzva’ot has a day in store for all who are proud and lofty, for all who are lifted high to be humiliated; for all cedars of the L’vanon that are high and lifted up . . .” (*Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 2:12-13*)

A haughty spirit finds it difficult to tolerate other people’s character flaws. The haughty person fails to recognize his own shortcomings. Instead, he focuses on the shortcomings of others. Most often, when we speak ill of others, we are defending our own pride. This reminds me of a quote by Josh Billings: “**A man never discloses his own character so clearly as when he**

describes another's." People elevate themselves by stepping on other people. By putting someone else down, we think we are lifting ourselves up. *Mishlei/Proverbs* contrast two kinds of people: a person who guards his words and a person with a haughty spirit. "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps himself out of trouble. "Scoffer" is what you call a proud, insolent person who acts with overweening conceit." (*Mishlei/Proverbs 21:23-24*)

Tehillim/Psalms also equates haughtiness with evil speech and warns HaShem will punish the slanderer and does not endure haughtiness. "If someone slanders another in secret, I will cut him off. Haughty eyes and proud hearts I cannot abide." (*Tehillim/Psalms 101:5*)

The big, tall, haughty cedar is the most likely tree in the forest to be cut down. Remember the saying? The bigger they are, they harder they fall. "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before stumbling." (*Mishlei/Proverbs 16:18*) The *Tanakh/Bible* says HaShem's eyes are on the haughty to bring them low" (*Sh'mu'el Bet/2nd Samuel 22:28*) If we attempt to elevate ourselves by stepping on others, we inevitably lower ourselves. This is part of what Yeshua meant when He taught: If a man lifts himself up he will be humbled, but if he humbles himself he will be lifted up.

Imagine yourself in the following scenario. You are at the Sabbath table with friends from your community when your friends raise the topic of a person known to be your adversary. Your friends begin to criticize your adversary. How do you respond? It feels good to have your friends on your side, and the temptation is to join them in pointing out your adversary's flaws. It makes you look better. Or does it??? The higher path is to come to the defense of the person and quiet the criticisms. When you show this kind of integrity and humility, it not only makes you **look** better, it makes **you** better.

To be honest with you, I'm not sure I am able to connect all the dots in this portion. However, at the risk of missing some things, there is one part which is repeated from *Vayikra/Leviticus 14:11-20*, specifically verses **14**, **17** and **18**, which we need to cover.

Verse 14 "The *Cohen/priest* is to take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the tip of the right ear of the person being purified, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot."

Verses 17 and 18 state "Then the *Cohen* is to put some of the remaining oil, in his hand, on the tip of the right ear of the person being purified, on the thumb of his right hand, on the big toe of his right foot and on the blood of the guilt offering. Finally, the *Cohen* is to put the rest of the oil in his hand on the head of the person being purified; and the *Cohen* will make atonement for him before Adonai.

First, we need to remember the blood is symbolic of the blood Yeshua shed to redeem us. Let's read *Ivrim/Hebrews 9:12-14*. "He (Yeshua) entered the Holiest Place once and for all. And He entered not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, thus

setting people free forever. For if sprinkling ceremonially unclean persons with the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer restores their outward purity; then how much more the blood of the Messiah, Who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself to G~d as a sacrifice without blemish, will purify our conscience from works which lead to death, so we can serve the living G~d! These scriptures, as you can plainly see, tell us Yeshua entered the Holiest Place once and for all. It wasn't the blood of bulls and goats which redeemed us, but the blood of *Yeshua HaMashiach/Jesus the Messiah*. So, we have a picture of the redemption of man. Our complete redemption!

Do you remember in **Sh'mot/Exodus 29:20**, when we saw the same "putting of the blood" on the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot of Aharon and his sons when they were consecrated into the priesthood?

Sh'mot/Exodus 19:5 and 6 reveals to us our calling as priests: "5 Now if you will pay careful attention to what I say and keep my covenant, then you will be my (seh-g-you-lah) *segullah/own treasure* from among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 And you will be a kingdom of *cohanim/priests* for me, a holy nation." These are the words you are to speak to the children of Israel."

This is not merely a Torah concept, but is also found in the B'rit Hadashah, as we see in (Kay-fah Ah-lehf) **Kefa Alef/1st Peter 2:9 and 10**: "9 But you are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood (the King's cohanim)**, a holy nation, a *peculiar people/segullah*; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are G~d's people; before you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." Each of us is called to be a priest before HaShem, and to a lost world.

As we look at the placing of the blood on the three areas of the body, we can also draw some additional conclusions. We are sanctified by the shed blood of Yeshua, and this is pictured in the placing of the blood.

- The blood on the tip of the ear, tells us we need to be careful of what we hear. We are to be sensitive to the voice of Adonai BUT also we should guard our hearing from what would harm us spiritually. The ear is on the head, and also lets us know our thought life must be sanctified as well. **Romans 12:1 and 2** tells us: "1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for G~d. This will please Him; it is the logical "Temple worship" for you. 2 In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the (oh-lahm hah-zeh) *olam hazeh/this world*. Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds; so you will know what God wants and will agree what He wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed."

- The blood on the thumb of the right hand represents our work, as well as our recreation. Both of which we do with our hands. We see this principle in **Colossians 3:22-24**: “22 Slaves, obey your human masters in everything, not serving only when they are watching you, to win their favor, but single-heartedly, fearing the L~rd. 23 Whatever work you do, put yourself into it, as those who are serving, not merely other people but, the L~rd. 24 Remember, as your reward, you will receive the inheritance from the L~rd. You are slaving for the L~rd, for the Messiah.”
- The blood on the great toe of the right foot signifies our walk. This means our manner of life/lifestyle. In **Yochanan Alef/1st John 2:6** we read: “A person who claims to be continuing in union with Him, Yeshua, ought to conduct his life the way He, Yeshua, did.”

POINT OF INTEREST

As I was turning to the above scripture (1st John 2:6) and THOUGHT I was in the correct place, Chapter 2:6, read: “And he condemned the cities of *S’dom/Sodom* and *’Amora/Gomorrhah*, reducing them to ashes and ruin, as a warning to those in the future who would live ungodly lives.” Holy Cow, no!, Holy Smoke, no, I don’t mean that either. OY! Yeah, that’s what I meant, OY! Oy Vey!!! What’s this got to do with this portion? A quick look led me to see I was in **Kefa Bet/2nd Peter 2:6** . . . NOT where I was supposed to be so I quickly turned to **Yochanan Alef/1st John 2:6** and proceeded with my typing. As I did, in my spirit, I heard “you did not turn there by accident; I led you there.” I responded verbally with “You did?” so I went back to reread it and I saw the connection my Father wanted me to include. So I am!

Yeshua was Torah observant, He lived in obedience to His Father, therefore our manner of living must also be Torah pursuant, living obediently in such a manner to please our Heavenly Father.

Most every time I get to a point about Yeshua being Torah observant, I remember the WWJD bracelets I used to wear, as well as nearly everyone I knew. At the time I was clueless about being Torah pursuant. Oh sure, I read my Bible and went to church but I wasn’t raised in the Original Covenant. I’m so GLAD to know the **Renewed Covenant/New Testament** isn’t really new and Yeshua, according to **Mattityahu/Matthew 5:17**, lived the very things His Father instructed **Moshe/Moses**. There are reasons our Father gave us the guidelines He did. We are told they are just for the Jews but, in reality, they are beneficial for all who call Him Father.

As a closing thought, for this chapter . . . Do you remember learning or hearing the song “Be careful little ears what you hear”? It seems to me, we, as adults, would do well to remember it too. The words of the verses cover it all . . .

Verse 1

Be careful little eyes what you see

Be careful little eyes what you see
For the Father up above
Is looking down in love
So be careful little eyes, what you see

Verse 2: Be careful little ears what you hear
Verse 3: Be careful little mouth what you speak
Verse 4: Be careful little hands what you do
Verse 5: Be careful little feet where you go

For the Father up above, Is looking down in love
So be careful little . . . , What/where you

“Then the owner of the house is to come and tell the Cohen, ‘It seems to me there may be an infection in the hour.’” (**Vayikra/Leviticus 14:35**)

These verses (**14:35-53**) describe the ceremonial procedure for diagnosing and cleansing a home where signs of *biblical leprosy/tzara’at* have appeared on the walls. Mold and mildew are not uncommon on interior walls. It can be a real problem in Israel during the rainy winter season. Mold and mildew, however, do not necessarily constitute biblical leprosy. Not every form of mild and mildew is leprous.

Just as with the individual, the priest was to make an examination and diagnosis of the house. If the priest diagnosed the mildew problem as *tzara’at*, he declared the home ritually unfit. The procedure for purifying such a house is similar to the procedure for purifying the individual. In both cases, the ritual with the two birds, the cedar-wood, crimson yarn and hyssop are identical. The shaving of the individual’s hair can be compared to the scraping of the plaster from an afflicted house.

The Sages blame *tzara’at* in a house on the words spoken within the house. Most of our evil speech is uttered within the four walls of our own homes. Our spouses are our confidants as we unburden our hearts, blow off a little steam and lodge complaints about others. This kind of murmuring seems harmless. There are no victims. The words never leave the house, so what’s the problem? Actually, there is a victim and you are it! By indulging in critical speech, you are conditioning yourself to exercise a critical spirit. Day after day you are patterning your mind to concentrate on the shortcomings of others. Moreover, you are poisoning the other members of your household with your bitterness. One could say the very walls of your house absorb the evil spiritual energy you are creating. The entire home becomes defiled. The solution to the problem is to break the habit. Make a pact with those in your home not to speak or tolerate evil speech any longer. Scrape the infected spiritual plaster off the walls and start with a fresh coat of optimism, grace and kindness. See it if freshens up the place a bit!

CHAPTER 15

In looking for commentaries on this chapter to see how others addressed these matters, I was unable to find very much. Perhaps others are even more uncomfortable addressing bodily emissions than I am. It appears to me, the primary purpose of Chapter 15 was to eliminate defiling of The Tabernacle. This involves uncleanness of a man or a woman, through seminal emission, menstruation or sexual intercourse. Although this deals with human discharges which contaminate to various degrees and may require offerings as part of the purification process, the goal is to no longer be separated and be able to return to Tabernacle/Temple worship.

I remember my mom telling me, when I got married, during my *menstrual period/niddah* I should refrain from intercourse. I wonder now if she knew it was a biblical command or if it was just “advice” passed down from generation to generation.

During a woman’s niddah, she is *tameh*, a Hebrew term which has been incorrectly translated as “*unclean*”. The word *tameh* has nothing to do with uncleanness. When one is *tameh* it means the individual has had some contact with death. In the instance of a menstruating woman, it is the death of the ovum. Similarly, when a man has had physical relations, which inevitably involve the death of millions of sperm, he too is *tameh*. This Biblical tradition shows a great sensitivity to and awareness of the natural life cycle.

These verses indicate even sexual relationship in the marriage bed causes uncleanness and both parties are to bathe themselves in water and will remain unclean until evening (**verse 18**). You see, being ritually unclean is not always because of sinful behavior. Sex, in the context of marriage, is something HaShem created and blessed.

However, in most cases today, where uncleanness is manifested, sin is also manifested. We must strive to avoid being unclean. **Ivrim/Hebrews 13:4** says “Let marriage be held in respect among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers G~d will judge.”

Much of Metzora directly deals with sexual relations and ritual uncleanness. Today, many are taught the Law was done away with and, as a result, do not follow the commandments of Scripture concerning sex, which in many cases leads to immorality, fornication and adultery. While bathing, to become ritually clean, may seem nominal, as we follow G~d’s simple instructions, we learn to be set-apart and not fall into the trap of sinners who have no respect for their bodies.

One commentary spoke of one lady’s personal tradition, which illustrated how the family purity laws can renew a marriage. The woman reported, upon her return from the Mikveh each month, her husband would lovingly place the wedding band back on her finger and say appropriate words to his “bride”.

AS A SIDE NOTE: Mikvehs have been found in medieval Spain, in ancient Italy and in the famed desert outpost of Masada. In fact, the single most decisive element archaeologists use in determining whether or not an unearthed settlement is Jewish is the presence of a Mikveh. This correlates with Halacha (Jewish law) which mandates that even before the town synagogue is built, a Mikveh must first be established.

Let us remember, whether we are married or unmarried, the marriage bed is to be “undefiled”. If we follow the manner which the L~rd intended, it will remain “undefiled” because His bride will be clean.

Metzora ~ מצרע ~ Person Afflicted With Tzara’at
Haftarah: M’lakhim Bet/2nd Kings 7:3-20

Our Haftarah tells about (met-zora-eem) *metzora’im/people with tzara’at*. However, in the previous Haftarah, Na’aman was Syrian; this time the metzoraim are Jewish men, who interestingly performed a great service for their nation. Initially, according to the Sages, these people displayed a type of selfishness which led to their punishment of tzara’at, but then they decided to put the needs of the people ahead of their own. This is one of my favorite stories from the Tanakh. You can’t help but see HaShem’s hand at work in all of this. Baruch HaShem!!!

Samaria was going through a terrible famine with extremely inflated prices for the little bit of food available. It is told mothers were killing and eating their own children. The prophet Elisha told King *Yoram/Jehoram* a miracle would happen the next day and food would be so plentiful it would be bought for ridiculously low prices. One of the king’s attendants, actually, the gatekeeper ridiculed Elisha, indicating even G~d could not make such a thing happen. Elisha let the gatekeeper know he would see the prophecy come true, but he would not benefit from it. As we know from reading the “rest of the story”, the gatekeeper did see the miracle come to pass and he was trampled to death at the gate of the city.

One of our Torah study participants brought these three points to the group concerning this Haftarah. Very appropriate, I might say!!!

1. If HaShem or His genuine spokesperson, a **true** prophet, says something will happen, “**It will happen**” no matter how unbelievable it may appear!
2. Even if you are “outside the camp” as were the lepers, HaShem still has a work for you to do!
3. “Listen” to the lowly (lepers). In doing so, you just may find “treasure”!

Metzora ~ מצרע ~ Person Afflicted With Tzara'at
B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 9:20-26;
Mark 5:24b-34; Luke 8:42b-48; Ivrim/Hebrews 13:4

Mattityahu/Matthew 9:20-26 Wow!!! We could spend our entire allotted time on just these seven verses. There is such an awesome teaching on the (tzeet-zeet) *tzitzit/fringes* and how their windings and knottings spell out the name of the L~rd as well as (eh-kahd) *echad/one*. There just isn't time or space for that right now.

The woman with the issue of blood (hemorrhaging) was in a state of ritual impurity. No wonder she approached from behind; she was afraid and this is why she hesitated to answer when Yeshua questioned who touched Him. Normally, the impure defiles the pure but this time, the opposite happened. The woman's impurity was instantly removed.

In **verse 23** Yeshua tells the flute-players and the crowd to get out. In Middle Eastern countries hired musicians and professional mourners were in keeping with the custom of the day. These people jeered at Him when He said she was not dead, only sleeping. Here we find Yeshua initiates the contact with what is regarded in Judaism as the primary source of all impurity, a dead body (**verse 25**). Again, Yeshua isn't made impure; on the contrary, the young girl is brought back to life!!!

Mark 5:24b-34 Mark's rendering of the **Matthew 9:20-22** account is a little more detailed but I could find no additional commentary.

Luke 8:42b-48 The same is true of Luke's account concerning the woman with the issue of blood.

Ivrim/Hebrews 13:4 "Marriage is honorable in every respect; and, in particular, sex within marriage is pure." I believe this verse is quite clear. There are some translations which render this verse as "let sex with marriage be pure." If this is correct, perhaps **Rav Sha'ul/Rabbi Paul** was encouraging his readers to observe the laws of family purity, specifically, the laws concerning the (nee-dah) *niddah/menstruous woman* with regard to **Vayikra/Leviticus 15:19**.

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Some parting thoughts concerning metzora and lashon hara: The Torah clearly shows us one of the causes of *tzara'at/leprosy* was *improper speech/lashon hara*. There are two types of people in the world . . . those who view the glass as half empty and those who view the glass as half full. Most usually, those who speak lashon hara view the glass as half empty. The people who view the glass as half full are not the critics and faultfinders, but they are the happy people in life who can see the positive in their spouses, their children, their friends AND their surroundings. As such, they are happier people.

Lashon Hara is destructive not only to the person about whom it is spoken; it is far more destructive to the person who speaks it because it teaches him/her to be negative, which is a terrible thing. Lashon hara is also an indication of pride. The one who speaks negatively or unkindly about others betrays an exalted opinion of one's self.

The corresponding Psalm for this Torah portion is: Psalm 120

Next Week's Lesson: Parashah #29

Acharei Mot ~ אַחֲרֵי מוֹת ~ After The Death

Torah: Vayikra/Leviticus 16:1~18:30

Haftarah: Yechezk'el/Ezekiel 22:1-19

**B'rit Hadashah: Romans 3:19-28; 9:30~10:13; 1st Corinthians 5:1-13 with
2nd Corinthians 2:1-11; Galatians 3:10,14; Ivrim/Messianic Jews 7:23~10:25**

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)!!!