



## **Parasha Tazria/Metzorah**

April 22, 2023

*Torah:* Leviticus 12:1-15:33

*Haftarah:* 2Kings 4:42-5:19; 2Kings 7:3-20

*Ketuvim Shlichim:* Romans 6:9-23

*Shabbat shalom Mishpacha!* We have a double *parasha* today, *Tazria* and *Metzorah*. *Tazria* means “conceives:” *1 Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying: 2 “Speak to Bnei-Yisrael, instructing: If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she will be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her niddah she will be unclean.”* (Leviticus 12:1-2 TLV). *Metzorah* means leper: *1 Then Adonai spoke to Moses, saying: 2 “This is the Torah of the one with tzara’at in the day of his cleansing.”* (Leviticus 14:1-2a TLV). The TLV has translated *hametzorah*, the leper, as “the one with *tzara’at*,” תַּצְרָאֵת, leprosy.

The subject of “ritual purity” was introduced last week in *Parasha Shemini*. Two important terms in *Parasha Tazria* are *tum’ah*, ritually impure and *taharah*, ritually pure. Both terms are related to a ritual performed during the days of the Tabernacle and Temple. They have nothing to do with physical uncleanness or washing to remove dirt or other impurities. If a person was *tum’ah*, ritually impure, something which could happen to them in several ways, they would have to physically leave the camp and live outside it. They were required to wear torn clothing and to cover the lower part of their face to identify themselves as being unclean. If they were approached by someone, they had to call out “*tamei, tamei*,” unclean, unclean, to notify the person not to approach them. The condition of being ritually unclean was *tum’ah* and the state of a person in it was *tamei*. *Taharah* was the condition of being ritually clean and a person in a state of cleanness was *tahor*.

The first situation that we encounter in *Parasha Tazria* is ritual impurity with regard to childbirth. *1 Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying: 2 “Speak to Bnei-Yisrael, instructing: If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she will be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her niddah she will be unclean”* (Leviticus 12:1-2 TLV). The TLV has translated *davotah*, meaning “her impurity” as *niddah*, another Hebrew word, meaning, “a condition of unwellness.” *Niddah* usually refers to a woman in her menstrual cycle, but means more than just the actual time of the menstrual period. It means “set apart or separated from the community,” the condition that the woman would be in until she had completed all requirements for returning to a condition of spiritual purity. During this period of time, she would be considered *tu’mah*, ritually unclean.

The next chapter, chapter 13, describes the situations surrounding the condition known as *tzara’at*. It begins: *1 Then Adonai spoke to Moses and to Aaron saying: 2 “When a man has a swelling on the skin of his body or a scab or a bright spot, and it becomes the plague-mark of tzara’at in his flesh, then he shall be brought to Aaron the kohen, or to one of his sons, the kohanim”* (Leviticus 13:1-2 TLV). The word *tzara’at* comes from the root *tzara* which means “to have a skin disease.” It has come to be called leprosy because of the translation used in the Septuagint, the Greek language *Tanakh* of about 200 BCE. But, that is not the leprosy of today. Modern leprosy, what is known as Hansen’s Disease, is caused

by a bacteria which acts slowly upon the body, very gradually cutting off blood supply and causing the eventual loss of fingers and toes and even whole limbs, ears or noses. Despite all the terrible pictures which we have seen of people with leprosy, Hansen's Disease is very treatable with antibiotics today and has almost completely disappeared as a disease. But, Biblical *tzara'at* appears to have been more than one specific condition. Modern attempts at naming the different kinds of Biblical *tzara'at* have suggested psoriasis for the whitening condition, impetigo as the spreading sores and erysipelas, a bacterial infection caused by a strep bacteria, as the burns. The boils could have been the familiar boils of my childhood, a painful bacterial swelling which would eventually come to a head and burst, something which we see very little of today. The sores on the head or face of the leper may have been ringworm. So, it is possible that Biblical *tzara'at* was actually a number of different conditions, some of which were contagious and some which were not. *Tzara'at* could also be found on cloth and leather and the TLV Bible describes one instance of it as a "destructive mildew." (Leviticus 13:52).

There are instances in Scripture where *tzara'at* was used by ADONAI to punish people for a sin. Moses' sister *Miryam* got the disease because of her *lashon hara* against her brother and ADONAI had her put outside the camp for seven days. The *Talmud* equates *tzara'at* as punishment for *lashon hara* and other types of sin. *Lashon hara*, gossip and tale bearing, is commanded against in *Torah* and is definitely not to be a part of the life of a follower of Yeshua. Yeshua encountered several different lepers during His time on earth. One was in Matthew chapter 8: 1 *When He came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him.* 2 *And a man with tzara'at came to Him and bowed down before Him, saying, "Master, if You are willing, You can make me clean."* 3 *Yeshua stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing. Be cleansed."* Immediately his *tzara'at* was cleansed. 4 *And Yeshua said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go show yourself to the kohen and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them"* (Matthew 8:1-4 TLV). Yeshua told the man to do what the *Torah* required, to have the *kohen* declare him clean and then go and offer his gift in the Temple. What the man was required to do is described in Leviticus chapter 14, and is a very detailed series of steps leading to ritual purity and then the presentation of a sacrifice. Everything which we find in Yeshua's actions show that He perfectly followed *Torah* and commanded others to do so also.

Going back to *Parasha Tazria* and looking again at the purity requirements for a woman following childbirth, we find that they are different for the birth of a son than for the birth of a daughter. Following the birth of a son, the mother would be unclean for seven days and then on the eighth day the boy would have his *b'rit milah*, his circumcision. After that, the mother would be unclean for an additional thirty-three days during which time she could not enter the sanctuary. But, she was not sent outside of the camp as was one with *tzara'at*, but remained in her home away from the general population. The mother of a daughter was initially unclean for 14 days, the same length of time as during her monthly *niddah*, her menstruation. But, her uncleanness then continued for sixty-six more days. In total, a mother was unclean for forty days for a male child and eighty days for a female child. *Torah* doesn't tell us why the difference, but the *Talmud* suggests that it has to do with the sin of Eve, who succumbed to *HaSatan's* temptations and tempted Adam.

Yeshua's mother *Miryam*, was *Torah*-observant after His birth. The Book of Luke shows us that she did everything that *Torah* required. 7 *...and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped Him in strips of cloth and set Him down in a manger, since there was no room for them in the inn.* (Luke 2:7 TLV). *Miryam* gave birth to Yeshua and afterward remained

there in their house with the baby for seven days. *21 When eight days had passed for His brit-milah, He was named Yeshua, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb* (Luke 2:21 TLV). According to what we just read in Leviticus 12, *Miryam* was unclean for seven days and on the eighth day, Yeshua had his *b'rit milah* and was given His name. This was all happened in Bethlehem where *Yosef* had gone to be registered. *Miryam, Yosef* and Yeshua were in Bethlehem for a total of forty days after Yeshua's birth in obedience to the *Torah* command and then went to the Temple in Jerusalem. *22 And when the days of their purification were fulfilled, according to the Torah of Moses, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present to Adonai.* *23 As it is written in the Torah of Adonai, "Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to Adonai."* *24 So they offered a sacrifice according to what was said in the Torah of Adonai: "a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons"* (Luke 2:22-24 TLV). There are two different subjects addressed in these three verses. The first subject is *Miryam's* impurity. We see that in these underlined verses: *22 And when the days of their purification were fulfilled, according to the Torah of Moses, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present to Adonai.* *23 As it is written in the Torah of Adonai, "Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to Adonai."* *24 So they offered a sacrifice according to what was said in the Torah of Adonai: "a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons"* (Luke 2:22-24 TLV). Leviticus chapter 12 describes what was required with regard to *Miryam's* cleansing, but it is not described here in Luke, only alluded to. The two birds offered were for the cleansing from *Miryam's* uncleanness as specified in Leviticus 12:8, the sacrifice allowed for the poor.

The second subject in these verses is that Yeshua is identified as a firstborn son, something which also had a *Torah* requirement. The underlined verses refer to that: *22 And when the days of their purification were fulfilled, according to the Torah of Moses, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present to Adonai.* *23 As it is written in the Torah of Adonai, "Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to Adonai."* *24 So they offered a sacrifice according to what was said in the Torah of Adonai: "a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons"* (Luke 2:22-24 TLV). As a first-born son, Yeshua had to be presented to ADONAI for redemption. ADONAI introduced the principle of the firstborn in Exodus chapter 13 prior to the Exodus, but Numbers chapter 3 tells us how it was done: *5 "Take the Levites in place of all the firstborn of Bnei-Yisrael, and the livestock of the Levites in place of their livestock. The Levites will be Mine. I am Adonai. 46 To redeem the 273 firstborn of Bnei-Yisrael exceeding the number of the Levites, 47 you are to collect five shekels for each, based on the shekel of the Sanctuary, which is 20 gerahs. 48 Give the money for the redemption of the extra ones of the firstborn of them to Aaron and his sons." 49 Hence Moses collected the redemption money for those exceeding the number redeemed by the Levites.* (Numbers 3:45-48 TLV). This means that those born in the Tribe of Levi were not redeemed, only those of the other tribes. The price of the redemption of the firstborn sons of the other tribes was in some way a payment for having the Levites serve ADONAI in their place. In this case, the number of Levite males one month old and older was 22,000 and this number was exceeded by 273 one month old males from the other tribes. Those 273 were redeemed for five shekels each. That was what the males of the other tribes owed for having the Levites serve ADONAI in their place. Thereafter, every first-born son of any of the other tribes was required to be redeemed.

I have told you this story before. Sixteen or seventeen years ago, a man came to me at the synagogue and said that he wanted to redeem his firstborn son. I don't know who he was or where he was from. He just appeared at the synagogue one day while I was here. I explained that I wasn't a *kohen*, but he said: "that didn't matter" and handed me five silver dollars and left. He did this because he believed that he was to obey the Scripture in Numbers

which says: 48 “Give the money for the redemption of the extra ones of the firstborn of them to Aaron and his sons.” (Numbers 3:48 TLV). That was his motivation. That requirement is inactive for us today because there is no Levitical priesthood. But, it was required for Yeshua. The payment for *Pidyon Haben*, the redemption of the firstborn son for Yeshua, is implied in the Luke Scripture by the words: they brought Him to Jerusalem to present to Adonai. No mention was made of the five shekel payment, but I’m certain that it would have been paid.

There is another aspect of Yeshua’s calling seen in this event and others. These are things which his parents did for him as a child and things which he did later for Himself, things that were done so that He would fulfill all of the requirements of the *Torah* and all of the words of prophecy about Himself. In Matthew 5:17-18, He said that He came to fulfill *Torah*. Because Yeshua was a firstborn son from the Tribe of Judah and not a firstborn son of the Tribe of Levi, He was not exempt from redemption because He was the Son of G-d. And, even though He was not born to be a *kohen*, a priest, according to *Torah*, yet He was a *kohen*.

In Hebrews chapter 8 it says: *1 Now here is the main point being said. We do have such a Kohen Gadol, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. 2 He is a priestly attendant of the Holies and the true Tent—which Adonai set up, not man. 3 For every kohen gadol is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, so it is necessary for this One also to have something to offer. 4 Now if He were on earth, He would not be a kohen at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Torah. 5 They offer service in a replica and foreshadower of the heavenlies—one that is just as Moses was instructed by God when he was about to complete the tabernacle. For He says, “See that you make everything according to the design that was shown to you on the mountain”* (Hebrews 8:1-5 TLV). Yeshua’s parents fulfilled for Him the *Torah* requirement of redemption of the firstborn son, *Pidyon Haben*. He was redeemed because He was not from the Tribe of *Levi*, yet He became a *kohen*, but not a *kohen* of this earth. His priesthood is of heaven and He serves in the Tabernacle there, a tabernacle not made by human hands.

Hebrews 7:11 tells us that Yeshua was a *kohen* “according to the order of *Melechizedek*, not according to the order of *Aaron*.” In the Book of Genesis, Yeshua’s ancestor Abraham paid tithe to a mysterious figure, a man named *Malkitzedek*, the King of *Shalem*, the city which would later become Jerusalem. There are all sorts of speculation about this man and who he was. *18 Then Melechizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine—he was a priest of El Elyon. 19 He blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by El Elyon, Creator of heaven and earth, 20 and blessed be El Elyon, Who gave over your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything* (Genesis 14:18-20 TLV). I believe *Malkitzedek* was just who we are told he was; a man called by ADONAI to be a *kohen*. Some say he was *Shem*, Noah’s son and some say that he was Yeshua Himself. But, I believe that he was just who Scripture says he was, *Malkitzedek*, a priest of *El Elyon*, G-d most High. It wasn’t who he was which is important. It was the offices which he held which are important. He was both a priest and a king, a type which Yeshua fulfilled. His ancestor David prophesied of Him: *4 “Adonai has sworn, and will not change His mind: “You are a Kohen forever according to the order of Melechizedek”* (Psalm 110:4 TLV). Inspired by ADONAI, David declared that Yeshua would forever be a priest, that His priesthood was an eternal priesthood rather than the Levitical priesthood limited by their human life span.

Our second *parasha* is *Metzarah*. Speaking of a *metzarah*, a person with *tzara’at*, *Torah* says: *46 “All the days during which the plague is on him he will be unclean. He is unclean. He*

*is to dwell alone. Outside of the camp will be his dwelling.*” (Leviticus 13:46 TLV). Outside the camp is where we all were before we knew Yeshua as our Messiah. We were unclean and outside the camp of ADONAI’s righteousness, in a sense, spiritual lepers. When we trusted in Yeshua, we were brought into the camp and given access to holy things. Yeshua, the Son of G-d, Himself was completely holy, and went outside the holy camp into the unclean, unholy where we were. By His sacrifice outside the camp, He cleansed us from our “uncleanness” and brought us into the camp: *12 Therefore, to make the people holy through His own blood, Yeshua also suffered outside the gate. 13 So let us go to Him outside the camp, bearing His disgrace. 14 For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come.* (Hebrews 13:12-14 TLV). Gate, *pulé* (poo'-lay) in Greek, refers to the city gate or the camp gate. Outside the Hebrew camp was a place of defilement, uncleanness, corruption, condemnation, rejection and punishment. But, Hebrews 13 says that Yeshua died outside the camp. Look at this Scripture about the *metzarah* again: *46 “All the days during which the plague is on him he will be unclean. He is unclean. He is to dwell alone. Outside of the camp will be his dwelling.”* (Leviticus 13:46 TLV).

Was Yeshua spiritually a leper? The ancient rabbis saw Him as a leper: “The Messiah - what is his name?...The Rabbis say, The Leper Scholar, as it is said, *‘surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted...’*” (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98b). The early rabbis recognized the individual in Isaiah 53 as the suffering Messiah, although they did not know that He was Yeshua. Isaiah wrote: *4 Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our pains. Yet we esteemed Him stricken, struck by God, and afflicted.* (Isaiah 53:4 TLV). Modern Rabbinic rabbis disagree. They say Isaiah 53 refers to the Jewish people who have suffered. One day soon, they will agree with the ancient rabbis and even know Messiah’s name. Yeshua, although He was the Son of G-d, willingly accepted the condition of “leper” and bore these afflictions.

Hebrews 13 tells us that Yeshua suffered outside the camp and it is there that we must go to him. Inside the camp was cleanness, but we must go outside the camp to the place of uncleanness to become clean. Yeshua’s unclean dead body can make us who are spiritually unclean, clean. We are told: *13 So let us go to Him outside the camp, bearing His disgrace.* (Hebrews 13:13 TLV). What does it mean to share His disgrace? The Greek word used is *oneidismos* (on-i-dis-mos), meaning “reproach.” Reproach is defined as: The expression of disapproval or disappointment. Yeshua willingly accepted the disapproval of the High Priest and certain of the leaders of Israel in order to die for us, to die outside the camp for us, a disgraceful thing, to die as a criminal. What does it mean for us, to go outside the camp to Him? It means that when we trust in Yeshua, we are willing to accept whatever disgrace that is cast at us because of being His follower. And, today, we see that reproach being hurled at Yeshua’s followers by many of those of the world.

To go outside the camp “bearing His disgrace” means that we must go to where He is in order to receive spiritual healing. He is outside the camp in disgrace, “smitten of G-d and afflicted,” as it says in Isaiah 53:4. And it is there that we find our spiritual healing. Yeshua became our sacrifice outside the camp and that is where we must go to identify with Him. Even though the *metzarah*, the leper of ancient days, was outside the camp and unclean, today it is reversed. We go outside the camp where it is unclean to Yeshua in order to become clean. Last *Shabbat*, we spoke about the wicked thoughts which come out of the human heart. Yeshua said: *18 “But the things that proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and those things make the man unholy.”* (Matthew 15:18 TLV). What is in our hearts? We must examine ourselves and repent regarding what we find there to be made spiritually clean.

When we have unforgiven sin, we are spiritually unclean. Only Yeshua's blood shields us from ADONAI's wrath. He cannot look upon sin, but sees us through the cleansing power of Yeshua's blood. In the Tabernacle, it was the blood of an innocent animal which shielded an Israelite from ADONAI's wrath. For us, it is Yeshua's blood.

Continuing to sin after salvation is something that we all do, even after we are covered by His blood. No one is free from sin before or after trusting in Yeshua. It's part of being human. Yeshua said: "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." (John 8:7). But, continuing to commit the same sins over and over brings up a question. Can continued sinning lead to the loss of salvation? The writer of Hebrews seems to have answered this exact question: *26 For if we keep on sinning willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but only a terrifying expectation of judgment and a fury of fire about to devour the enemies of God.* (Hebrews 10:26-27 TLV). It is clear in both the Greek and the English that these verses refer to willful sin after salvation. There are those who interpret this verse to refer to "the unforgiveable sin," the sin of rejecting Yeshua altogether, but there is no evidence of that here. Sin is from the Greek *hamartanontōn* (ham-ar-tan'-on-ton), from *hamartanō* (ham-ar-tan'-o), meaning: to miss the mark, do wrong, sin. The word "willful" is from *hekousiōs* (hek-oo-see'-ose), meaning voluntarily, willingly, of one's own accord, spontaneously. The difference in the two approaches is whether you believe "once saved, always saved" or you believe that a person can be saved and then can lose his salvation, fall from grace. Because I believe that ADONAI gives us free will to choose, my belief is the second, that a person can be saved and then lose their salvation. These two verses in Hebrews describe exactly how this can happen. The cause of one losing his salvation is "willful sin." ADONAI is long suffering and willing to forgive, but no one knows how far He will go before removing a person's name from the Lamb's Book of Life. Here is something to consider. We know that G-d is pure and holy. *Kefa* wrote: *15 Instead, just like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in everything you do. 16 For it is written, "Kedoshim you shall be, for I am kadosh."* (1Peter 1:15-16 TLV). Why would ADONAI accept those who continue to sin willfully, if they did not repent of their sins? Essentially, those who believe that those who continue to willfully sin are demanding that He accept them along with their willful sins. Whether we realize it or not, when we are carrying unforgiven sin or sins that we haven't forgiven of others, we are spiritually outside the camp, outside in a place of spiritual un-cleanness. This does not mean that we have lost our promise of eternal life, but it does mean that our relationship with Yeshua is damaged. That's for common everyday sins. But, for continued willful sins, our relationship with Him is in extreme danger. If we get in that condition, we need to be quick to make *teshuvah*, to repent, and to return, asking forgiveness and to be restored. ADONAI is merciful, but we don't know how far His mercy extends with regard to willful sin. We must not wait, but repent daily.

The ritual purity of *Parasha Tazria* was for a people who met ADONAI in the Tabernacle. That is not possible for us today, but the underlying principle remains. We cannot have unforgiven sin remain in our lives. ADONAI said: "You are to be holy because I am holy." In His holiness, He is set apart from every kind of uncleanness and corruption. And, He commands us to be holy, set apart from uncleanness and corruption. We are commanded to separate ourselves from moral uncleanness and any kind of evil. When we truly trust in Yeshua as the sacrifice which provides permanent atonement, we have made the first step toward purity. Salvation is a free gift, a gift of G-d's grace. Thereafter, after salvation, it is up to us. The *Torah* is our guide and teaches us to walk in the way that ADONAI desires of us. It teaches us to be holy, to be set apart for Yeshua. When we sin, we don't have to bring

a sacrifice because Yeshua's sacrifice has already atoned for all of our sin. Our part is to repent, to make *t'shuvah* and return.

*Tevillah*, immersion into Messiah Yeshua, is a physical act related to the principle of "cleanness." When we are submerged in *mayim chayim*, living water, we are momentarily not breathing and in a sense, are immersed into Yeshua's death. In rising from the water, we symbolically emerge from the womb as new creations, born again from on high. This is a parallel to those who were required "wash their clothes and be clean" as performed by the *metzarah*, the one with *tzara'at*. The difference for the follower of Yeshua is that *tevillah* is a onetime event, an event which takes place after trusting in Yeshua. Symbolically, it makes us new creations who are clean. Thereafter, to remain clean, we must repent regularly, any time that we realize that we have sinned.

If we claim to be a follower of Yeshua, the proof is in our circumcised hearts as revealed by our walk with Him. This is outwardly shown by our becoming more and more like our Messiah. It has been said that the most important 12 inches in our bodies is the distance between our heads and our hearts. We can take spiritual meaning, such as that which we learn in *Parasha Tazria* and *Parasha Metzarah* into our heads, our brains, and it resides there as knowledge. But, unless we also receive it into our hearts, 12 inches down, it remains just "head knowledge." What we need is "heart knowledge," spiritual understanding which shines forth from circumcised hearts, hearts which have transformed us into fully committed disciples of Yeshua.

*12 Therefore do not let sin rule in your mortal body so that you obey its desires. 13 And do not keep yielding your body parts to sin as tools of wickedness; but yield yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your body parts as tools of righteousness to God. (Romans 6:12-13 TLV).* There is an ever increasing distance between Yeshua's faithful followers and the people of the world. If we sincerely wish to follow Him, His Holy Spirit gives us the strength to overcome the temptations of the world. We don't have to continue in sin. Peter admonishes us: *15 Instead, just like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in everything you do. (1Peter 1:15 TLV). Shabbat shalom!*