

# METZORA – “LEPER”

## LEVITICUS (VAY’YIKRA) 14:1 – 15:33

### INTRODUCTION

1. The previous *sidrah* addressed the issue of the uncleanness that emanates from a human being.
  - a. Specifically it details the plague of *tzarat*.
2. This portion addresses what a *metzora* must do if his *tzarat* is healed.
  - a. No other contamination requires a priest to declare it so.
  - b. No other contamination can be allowed to linger if it is believed to be gone.
  - c. Underscores the belief that it is not the body but the behavior that needs improvement.
  - d. As soon as person’s heart changes, God removes the mark of this degradation.
  - e. He can begin the process of return.
3. Of all contaminated people, only *metzora* is excluded from all the camps of Israel.
  - a. He is as a corpse contaminating everything in a building in which he enters.
4. This portion also deals with other uncleanness including the laws of *niddah* – separation.
  - a. Menstrual cycle.
5. Must be understood that the context of this contamination is as it relates to those who would enter the *mishkan* or come in contact with holy things.

### CHAPTER 14: PROCESS OF PURIFICATION FOR METZORAH

1. It was two stage process for *metzora* to be considered clean.
  - a. First stage was ritual performed outside of camp.
2. When that ritual was complete, he could enter camp but still restricted to his tent.
  - a. He no longer contaminates an entire building by being in it.
  - b. After seven days more, he could bring his offerings and complete his purification.
3. Verse 2: “He shall be brought” – to an appointed place outside the camp.
  - a. The news of the leper’s recovery was brought to the priest.
  - b. It was taken literally that the priest’s decision to pronounce clean had to be in the day.
  - c. The priest could pronounce him clean same day symptoms disappear.
  - d. This is not the case with a seminal or menstrual discharge.
  - e. Only the *Kohen* could pronounce him unclean and only a *kohen* can say clean.
4. It has been noted in rabbinic literature that a priest going out of the camp would have been attended by those who took note, including young priests.
  - a. Result would be that a multitude of people would be witness to the event.
  - b. The word would get around that a *metzora* had been healed.
  - c. This is very important because of a point we’ll bring up later.
5. Consider the elaborate ritual to begin the process of being declared clean; it stands out.
  - a. The other issues addressed in this portion don’t come close in comparison.
6. There are different items that are necessary for his purification.
  - Two living clean birds – kosher and living only requirements.
  - Cedar wood.
  - Scarlet – a band of wool dipped in scarlet.
  - Hyssop – its leaves absorb and dispense liquids easily.

7. Verse 4: “Two living clean birds” – no portion is place on altar – not offerings.
  - a. One bird is slaughtered and blood flows into “living water” in earthen vessel.
  - b. Dead bird is buried; living bird released into a field.
8. To represent the *metzora*’s death state and restoration to life and community of Israel.
  - a. One interpretation is affliction was punishment for chatter and slander.
  - b. His purification is affected by chirping birds.
9. It is believed that the underlying cause of gossip is haughtiness because it breeds contempt for others which leads to talking about them in a derogatory manner.
  - a. This is why some commentators say cedar wood is used in cleansing process.
  - b. They say, because cedar is tall and imposing, it represents haughtiness.
10. Some interpretations suggest that cedar is a most durable wood and resistant to decay.
  - a. Therefore, it symbolizes the *metzora* who has overcome his circumstances.
10. Then there is Maimonides who said, “I do not know at present the reason for any of these things” referring to the cedar, scarlet and hyssop.
11. Hyssop is something that is associated with sprinkling and purification.

**“And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning.” – Exodus 12:22**

**“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”  
– Psalm 51:7**

12. Actually, these same three articles – cedar, scarlet and hyssop – are used in another mysterious ceremony – burning of ashes of the red heifer.

**“And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer.” – Numbers 19:6**

13. Red heifer speaks of the Messiah – living water in an earthen vessel.

**“For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” – Hebrews 9:13-14**

14. The articles used in the heifer sacrifice as well as cleansing of *metzora* are hinted at in Y’shua’s crucifixion.

**“Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth.” – John 19:29**

15. The point: elaborate ceremony of the cleansing of *metzora* stands out and points to Messiah.
  - a. If *tzarat* is because of spiritual condition, Messiah is one who cleanses contamination.
  - b. He is one who can raise us from death and restore us unto life.
  - c. He is the resurrection and the life.

16. Verse 7: Is pronounced “clean” and could rejoin his brethren but couldn’t enter Sanctuary.
  - a. Had to wash clothes, shave and bathe in water.
  - b. Had to remain in his tent for seven days more.
  - c. This was his intermediate stage between complete isolation and complete liberty.
17. If we see ourselves as the *metzora* and the purification process as being cleansed by Messiah:
  - We are permitted to be pronounced clean and reenter the community.
  - Still must remain outside the Sanctuary because a degree of uncleanness remains.
  - Adam was in the “sanctuary” but since then we have been “outside.”
  - Through Messiah we are pronounced “clean” but still retain a measure of contamination.
  - We are born again but remain in bodies that are carnal and corrupt.
  - There is another transition yet to come – mortal puts on immortality.
18. Verse 9: On the 7<sup>th</sup> day he was to shave every hair from his body and was clean.
  - a. When Levites were consecrated they too shaved (Num.8:7).
  - b. Head because it represented haughtiness.
  - c. Beard because it surrounded the mouth – that which spoke.
  - d. Eyebrows because they represent the trait of jealousy – through the eyes.
19. Verse 10: “And on the eighth day” – he brought offerings to the *mishkan*.
  - a. It was the 8<sup>th</sup> day that priests were consecrated.
  - b. Verse 14: Blood placed on ear, hand and foot identical to consecration of priests.
  - c. Verse 18: anointed with oil just as priests were anointed.
  - d. Reminding us of our purpose – to be priests.
20. Aaron and sons went from “unclean” to “clean” on the 8<sup>th</sup> day.
  - a. Does this speak of the future “8<sup>th</sup> Day” when we are priest of Most High?
21. He brought his offerings to the door of Sanctuary.
  - a. In days of Second Temple brought them to Nicanor Gate.
  - b. This is where the leper healed by Y’shua brought his offerings.

## CHAPTER 14: AS A TESTIMONY UNTO THEM

**“Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, ‘If You are willing, you can make me clean.’ Then Y’shua, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’ ” – Mark 1:40-44**

1. Assuming that this person is a *metzora*, there are several points that make this interesting.
  - a. First of all, Y’shua touches him.
  - b. Tells him to tell no one – leading some to think Y’shua didn’t want to reveal Himself.
  - c. Tells him to offer the gifts Moses commanded AS A TESTIMONY TO THEM.
  - d. “Them” would be the priests.
2. Considering that the cleansing of leper would have gained much attention, news would spread quickly so keeping it secret doesn’t seem to be reason.
3. The purpose Y’shua puts forward is that this cleansing would be testimony to priests.
  - a. The ritual would include the two birds, scarlet, cedar and hyssop.

4. There is a tradition that, in Israel's history, never a record of Israeli male offering gift.
  - a. Miriam had been afflicted as well and notice it was for *lashon ha'ra*.
  - b. Namaan who was a Syrian.
  - c. If an Israelite man healed, this would be a sign (one of many) of the Messiah's arrival.
  - d. After this occurred, many from Jerusalem showed up to investigate.
5. Another aspect of this is how it alludes to those considered to be unclean being cleansed.
  - a. Peter has a vision in which he learns that the Gentiles (unclean) were being cleansed.
  - b. In the case of *tzarat*, Y'shua alludes to the nations.
  - c. "Many lepers in days of Elisha but only Namaan the Syrian healed." - Luke 4:27

**"Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, 'Y'shua, Master, have mercy on us!' So when He saw them, He said to them, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Y'shua answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?' And He said to him, 'Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.' "** – Luke 17:12-19

6. Samaritans were viewed as being unclean, yet this was the only one who gave thanks.
  - a. Is it possible that laws of *tzarat* also speak to the uncleanness of the nations?
  - b. Were those who were stricken considered to be equivalent to the nations?
  - c. Consequently, Messiah is one who cleanses them from their uncleanness.

## **CHAPTER 14: TZARAT ON HOUSES**

1. There are interpretations that make it to be a fungus or other infestation.
  - a. It is believed by many that this was a supernatural occurrence.
  - b. Same kind of ritual for men, houses and garments.
  - c. Mildew couldn't be washed out with water.
2. Verse 34: Implies that this would only happen in land of Israel.
  - a. Laws for people and garments took effect in wilderness.
  - b. But for houses would apply later.
3. "I put" this affliction upon you – inferring that it is result of something.
4. Like a man, house not unclean until priest pronounced it so.
  - a. Verse 36: all the contents were removed before inspection lest they be unclean.
  - b. Thus, if it were something natural like mold, they would have been contaminated.
5. Verse 44: "a malignant leprosy" – one that is spreading.
6. Verse 45: Compare this verse to Zechariah 5.

**"And he shall break down the house, **its stones, its timber**, and all the plaster of the house, and he shall carry them outside the city to an unclean place."** – Leviticus 14:45

**“I will send out the curse, says the LORD of hosts; It shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by my name. It shall remain in the midst of his house and consume it, with its timber and stones.” – Zechariah 5:4**

7. This curse consumes the house including timber and stones.
  - a. This is result of unclean behavior.
  - b. Does this underscore the belief that *tzarat* is result of unclean behavior?
8. Verse 57: To teach what is unclean and when it was clean; this is the law of *tzarat*.
  - a. This is the purpose of these instructions – to teach between clean and unclean.
  - b. Y’shua healed the *metzora* to teach that He can make the unclean, clean.

## **CHAPTER 15: IMPURITY OF ISSUES**

1. Deals with physical secretions that render someone unclean.
  - a. Important as it relates to coming into contact with anything pertaining to Sanctuary.
2. Essentially, any man that has a discharge is unclean and things he touches are unclean.
  - a. But after seven “clean” days, on the eighth day he can be purified.
3. Verse 19: A woman in her menstrual cycle (*niddah*) is unclean for same period.
  - a. Anyone who touches her is considered unclean.
  - b. Like the men, she can be cleansed on the 8<sup>th</sup> day.
4. Interesting footnote: נדה *niddah* is related to נוד *Nod*.
  - a. Carries the idea of being someone put away and separated.
5. Women in *niddah* are to separate themselves from people or things that are required to remain ritually pure.
  - a. Those who come in contact are ritually impure.
  - b. But that matters if that person were to enter the *mishkan*.
6. Verse 25: A continual discharge after her normal cycle; she is unclean as long as it continues.
  - a. Anyone touching her is considered ritually unclean as well.
  - b. This is important considering the woman who touched the Y’shua’s *tzitziot*.
7. Scripture make it clear that husband and wife shouldn’t have relations during this time.
  - a. That is something that is forbidden.
  - b. But sharing a bed only becomes an issue if the man intends to enter *mishkan*.
  - c. Which means, that at this point, sharing the bed is not a critical issue.
8. That becomes very clear in verse 31:

**“Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness when they defile my tabernacle that is among them.” – Leviticus 15:31**

9. That is the context of these instructions.
10. The term “and you shall separate them” is related to the word *zer* or “crown.”
11. When God’s people separate themselves from unclean and devotes themselves to His service, they are worthy of a crown.
  - a. That is something we see in *Brit Chadasha* – crown of life to those who serve Him.
12. But when people insist on imposing their standards on things holy, result is disastrous.
  - a. Comparing, *niddah* with *nod*, makes one wonder what Cain’s mark was?
  - b. Something placed on his skin that forced him to wander.