

# TAZRIA – “CONCEIVE”

## LEVITICUS (VAY’YIKRA) 12:1 – 13:59

### INTRODUCTION

1. The previous *sidrah* detailed laws pertaining to food and those animals that defile.
2. Now, Torah will address laws of purification pertaining to what emanates from humans:
  - Child birth
  - Leprosy
  - Bodily secretions
3. There are essentially two distinct views in regard to laws of purity and impurity.
  - a. They are hygienic.
  - b. They are levitical – i.e. they are purely religious.
  - c. My view is they are both.
4. Hygienic view notes that rules of separation are to prevent spread of infection.
  - a. There are no prayers or sacrifices until AFTER purification.
  - b. The sacrifices are to provide for readmission back into the camp.
5. Other view notes that Scripture repeatedly states goal of these laws is to lead men to holiness.
  - a. The fear being excluded from the Sanctuary and unable to approach the Creator.
  - b. Many laws of purity applied in reference to *mishkan* and holy objects.
  - c. Many did not apply to ordinary life or people who didn’t enter the *mishkan*.
6. Again, my view is that both are correct.
  - a. Observance of Shabbat alludes to a spiritual motive and a social motive.

**“But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” – Exodus 20:10-11**

**“Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” – Deuteronomy 5:13-15**

7. Things happening outwardly are sometimes indicative of what is inside.
  - a. This is obvious when discussing *tzarat*.
  - b. The outward contamination does need to be segregated to prevent its spread.
  - c. In the meantime, we are reminded of His holiness and our call to be holy.
8. What we eat can cause ill effects outwardly; the remedy is to change what goes inside.

## CHAPTER 12: PURIFICATION AFTER CHILDBIRTH

1. After birth of a child, mother had to become ritually clean through offerings.
  - a. Many mistakenly connect this to the sentence imposed upon Eve (Gen. 3).
  - b. This view would suggest that the child is what defiles the woman.
2. More likely, these regulations deal with the secretions that are result of giving birth.
  - a. Because these laws deal with human contamination, birth is beginning of that process.
3. New life begins with spiritual impurity to show that “life” is not enough.
  - a. That “life” must be a servant to the Giver of life otherwise it is nothing.
  - b. There are those who “live” but who are not “alive.”
4. Thus, her cleansing suggests that she, along with child, is beginning the purification process.
5. Verse 2: “As in the days of her impurity” – after delivery she is considered as she is in *nidah*.
  - a. *Nidah* נִדָּה means someone who is “separated.”
  - b. This is referring to a woman’s menstrual cycle.
  - c. So after childbirth, mother is considered to be unclean in same manner.
  - d. Which, again, suggests it is to do with what is coming from the body.
6. Verse 3: “circumcised” - strengthens argument that purification of mother was solely from her physical condition.
  - a. Circumcision does not purify the child.
  - b. If it did, why is there no ritual for the female child?
7. Verse 3: “on the eighth day” – specifies this day so it is done even if on Shabbat.
  - a. Interestingly, eighth day is the consecration of the priests.
  - b. Israel is called to be a kingdom of priests (Ex 19).
8. Verse 4: “thirty three days” – after the first seven she immerses herself in a *mikveh*.
  - a. The *mikveh* was to remove her *nidah* contamination.
  - b. But remains unable to touch any “hallowed thing” until 40 days had expired.
  - c. Then she is to bring her offerings.

**“And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Y’shua, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘EVERY MALE WHO OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD’ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, ‘A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS.’ ” – Luke 2:21-24**

9. No explanation for why she is “unclean” twice as long when delivering a female.
  - a. Her purification was the same for either sex.
  - b. One explanation offered is only seven days for a boy because of *brit milah*.
10. Verse 6: “burnt offering ... sin offering” – why when there was no sin?
  - a. Was merely to demonstrate removal of unclean status.
  - b. Burnt offering was rededication to God after absence from Sanctuary.
11. Verse 7: “make atonement” – that which made it impossible to enter *mishkan* is removed.

## CHAPTER 13: WHAT IS TZARAT?

1. First thing to note is Hebrew spelling of *tzarat* צרעת often translated as “leprosy.”
  - a. It is from a root (*tzarah* צרע) that means “to erupt.”
  - b. It is related to words that mean “projecting outward” or even “vomiting.”
  - c. Family word *tzarah* צרה, meaning to “squeeze” is related to word for “pressure.”
  - d. In the “heart” of *tzarat* צרעת is the word *ra* רע – “evil.”
  - e. Important because, what we call “leprosy” is most likely not *tzarat* צרעת.
  - f. *Tzarat* is intended to place “pressure” on one to purge “evil” from his heart.
2. Because lepers and *metzora* מצרע are segregated from society, most felt they were same.
  - a. It was assumed that *metzora* was secluded to prevent the spread of the affliction.
3. Rabbinically, this has been rejected because the symptoms of each are dissimilar.
4. Leprosy is believed to be caused by a bacteria introduced by respiratory system.
5. Here are symptoms:
  - Attacks nervous system.
  - Results in disintegration of cartilage and consequent tissue loss.
  - Swelling of organs.
  - Deterioration of limbs, specifically digits.
  - Skin lesions.
    - a. Torah does not address anything but eruptions in the skin.
    - b. Leprosy thought to be incurable but *tzarat* can be cured.
6. In the text (13:13), if affliction covers entire body, person is not unclean but if he begins to heal, he is unclean.
  - a. If separation was to prevent spreading, why is he clean when it covers all of his body?
  - b. Rabbinically understood to mean, there is no hope for inner cleansing of this person.
7. If a house is afflicted, before it can be called unclean, all contents have to be removed.
  - a. If a danger of contagion, why remove contents from the quarantined house?
8. It is therefore believed that *tzarat* is not a bodily disease per se, but physical manifestation of a spiritual malady; punishment designed to provoke the afflicted to repent of misdeeds.
9. That it is mentioned subsequent to woman giving birth, does this hint at need to be born again?
  - a. Consider a baby’s skin to what laws of *tzarat* infer.
10. It is believed that primary cause is slander.
  - a. *Metzora* מצרע is contraction of *motzih ra* מוציא רע – “one who spreads slander.”
  - b. Also taught this comes as result of bloodshed, pride, robbery and selfishness.
11. Argument is that because slander undermines the good of community, guilty should be excluded from the community – he is a moral leper.
  - a. He experiences the pain of isolation that his slander has imposed on others.
  - b. The “clever” behavior of slander devours people and their reputations.
  - c. It is noted this does not come from eating pork but people and their reputations.
  - d. It is also to signify that being removed from camp is God removing His presence.
  - e. He is healed through repentance.
12. Rabbinically it is believed that this only happened when Creator was in their midst.
  - a. Also only when they were in *eretz Yisrael*.
  - b. That which is holy is sensitive to malicious slander.
13. It is also noted that Scripture uses *tzarat* to define many things that are unlike the others.
  - Whiteness of human skin.

- Loss of hair on scalp or beard.
  - Change of color in house or garment.
14. The last, which many think is mold (and which rabbis disagree) is not a natural occurrence.
    - a. Mold can develop arbitrarily.
  15. Rabbis teach that if someone does not guard his tongue:
    - a. The walls of his house change; if he repents the house is cleansed.
    - b. If he does not repent, his skin changes and he develops *tzarat* and is isolated.
  16. Evil speech considered to be:
    - *Lashon Ha’Ra*: something true but nevertheless forbidden.
    - Slander: that which is false.
  18. Thus, *tzarat* is considered a warning to a healthy person that he has a spiritual condition.
  19. As much as it is punishment it is a blessing because it provokes him to deal with it.

## CHAPTER 13: LAWS OF TZARAT

1. Verse 2: Was brought to Aaron or a priest to diagnose the disease.
  - a. Not to a physician but to the priest indicating this was result of spiritual condition.
  - b. Only a priest had authority to determine this.
2. Verse 4: “shut up him” or “quarantine” – prevent him from defiling others.
  - a. Contaminates everything inside a building he enters once he is deemed unclean.
  - b. But wasn’t he “contagious” when the priest inspected him?
  - c. What is now called leprosy develops slowly and little difference within seven days.
3. Verse 9: “in a person” – When it is in an *adam*, inferring it is more than skin affliction.
4. Verse 11: “old *tzarat*” – it is been there a long time and no preliminary isolation is needed.
  - a. This is a clear case of uncleanness.
5. Verse 12-13: When the *tzarat* covers entire body that person is declared clean.
  - a. Would seem this refutes contagion theory.
  - b. An affliction that covers entire body would seem to be most threatening of all.
  - c. Thus the belief that this is one who was so hardened there was nothing more to do.
  - d. Some interpret turning white indicates it is about to heal but declared unclean if it does.
  - e. Some suggest that this is a law that defies human comprehension.
6. Verse 29-44: *Tzarat* upon head and beard – hair falling out.
7. Verse 33: He is to shave himself; here is why this is interesting.
  - a. There are times when men were commanded to shave beard or head in that manner.
  - b. Ezekiel was commanded to shave entire body.
  - c. Joseph shaved presumably entire body.
8. Verse 44: The one who has *tzarat* on frontal or posterior bald spot is obviously contaminated.
  - a. This interpreted to mean that a merciful God does not wish to humiliate publically.
  - b. If someone is unrepentant, God will make it obvious by placing it on their head.
9. Verse 45: When pronounced unclean, *metzorah* is to dress and conduct himself as a mourner.
  - a. His was a living death, not only in physical sense, but was cut off from the community.
  - b. Calls out “unclean, unclean” that his uncleanness doesn’t contaminate them.
10. Verse 46: “He will dwell alone” – because slander separates families and communities.
  - a. Thus, the *metzorah* was to live in isolation.
  - b. To experience the pain of what his actions have wrought.
11. There were three camps:

- Camp of the Presence (including *mishkan* and courtyard).
  - Camp of the Levites (who dwelled around the *mishkan*).
  - Camp of Israel.
12. Anyone who had been contaminated by contacting a corpse could not enter *mishkan*.
  13. The man who had an emission of any type was prevented from entering Levite camp.
  14. Only a *metzarah* was excluded from all three camps.
    - a. In Israel, walled cities were given same status as wilderness camp.
    - b. Seems cruel if this is result of a disease contracted through arbitrary circumstances.
    - c. Again, underscores the belief this is result of internal spiritual condition.
    - d. He is to grieve over his behavior and repent.

## CHAPTER 13: TZARAT OF GARMENTS

1. Some hold to opinion that these spots on garments were caused by mildew or some parasite.
2. Some argue that afflictions on garments and houses are not natural occurrences.
  - a. This was intended to provoke the offender to repent.
3. Rabbis write that these type of events happened only when Israel was living in holiness.
  - a. Meaning that God was in there in their midst.
  - b. Someone who broke ranks was affected by *tzarat*.
  - c. These things occurred in Y'shua's day because He was in their midst.
4. Describes how if garment changes color, it would determine whether clean or unclean.
  - a. If not clean, it was to be burned with fire.
  - b. If this is not natural occurrence, is it a miraculous circumstance?
  - c. Miracle of scarlet thread.
5. The Torah portion ends with stating "this is the law (torah)" of *tzarat* affliction.
  - a. If one has been afflicted he should turn his heart back to the Creator.
  - b. Turn his heart and mind back to God's instruction (torah) which is a "fire."
  - c. Ultimately, they were turn to Y'shua, the Word made flesh.
  - d. In next Torah portion, we see how this is accentuated for us.