



Parasha Tazria

April 6, 2019

Torah: Leviticus 12:1-13:59

Haftarah: Ezekiel 45:16-46:18

Ketuvim Sh'lichim: Matthew 8:1-4

Some *parshiot* are more difficult to understand with regard to meaning which is important to us as Messianic followers of Yeshua and *Parasha Tazria* is one of those. Certain versions of the Bible with antinomian slants, slants which downplay the importance of *Torah* for today, don't help in our understanding. *Sha'ul* encouraged us to find meaning in *Torah* when he said: 4 "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Romans 10:4 KJV). Did he really say that? He wasn't a speaker of King James English, so we know that wasn't what he said. A much better understanding of the Greek text is: 4 "For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts" (Romans 10:4 CJB). This is a non-antinomian understanding of the Greek word *telos* which does mean end, but also means goal as in end goal. *Sha'ul* explained to those who read his letter to the congregation at Rome that it was the *Torah's* goal to provide the truth about Yeshua and through that truth they would be able to enter into the righteousness found in Him. And, truths relating to Messiah are still in *Torah* for those who diligently look for them. They're not always easy to find and it's that way in this *parasha*.

The subject of "ritual purity" was introduced last week in *Parasha Shemini* and *Parasha Tazria* continues it. There are some specific terms used here and this is probably just a review for you. I know something of Rabbi Tony's teaching; he is a legend among us for his two to three hour messages. And, so, I know that you already know everything which I will speak about today, but hopefully this review will be helpful to you. But, don't worry – I'm not trying to outdo Rabbi Tony in length today. Two terms in today's *parasha* are *tum'ah*, ritually impure and *taharah*, ritually pure. And, it means - related to a ritual. It has nothing to do with physical washing to remove dirt or other impurities. If a person was *tum'ah*, ritually impure, something which could occur 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 would call out "tamei," "tamei," unclean; unclean. 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 clean person was *tahor*.

The first situation which we encounter in *Parasha Tazria* is ritual impurity with regard to childbirth. The "title," "she conceives," is taken from verse 2 of Leviticus 12: 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, understanding that we are at least moderately knowledgeable about *Torah* things, has substituted *niddah* for the word *davotah*, the word actually there, and which means "a condition of unwellness," referring to her menstrual cycle. But, *niddah* 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.

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, it is very treatable with antibiotics today. But, *tzara’at* appears to have been more than one specific condition. Modern attempts at naming the different kinds of *tzara’at* have come up with psoriasis for the whitening condition, the spreading sores as impetigo and the burns as erysipelas, a bacterial infection caused by a strep bacteria. The boils mentioned could also have been the familiar boils of my childhood, a painful swelling that would eventually come to a head and burst. The sores on the head or face of the *metzarah*, the leper, are also speculated to be ringworm. *Tzara’at* was also found on cloth and leather and the TLV Bible describes one instance of it in verse 52 as a “destructive mildew.” Whatever all of these conditions were, they caused for the person or the material, a condition of ritual impurity.

There are also instances in Scripture where *tzara’at* was used by ADONAI to punish people for a sinful act. Moses sister *Miryam* was one recipient of the disease because of her *lashon hara* against her brother. The *Talmud* also equates *tzara’at* as punishment for *lashon hara* and other types of sin. But, regardless of the condition’s cause, the one inflicted could only come back into the camp or enter the Tabernacle after it had been declared *taharah*, clean, by a *kohen*.

Yeshua encountered several different lepers. One was in Matthew 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* says; first have the *kohen* declare you clean and then go and offer your gift in the Temple. What he would have done 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 fully supported *Torah*.

Looking again at the requirements for a woman following childbirth, we find different ones 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*. The mother of a daughter was initially unclean

for 14 days, the same length of time as during her monthly *niddah*. But, her uncleanness then continued for sixty-six more days. In total, a mother was unclean for forty days for a male and eighty days for a female. *Torah* doesn't tell us why the difference, but Talmudic texts suggest that it has to do with the sin of Eve, who succumbed to *HaSatan's* temptations, and then tempted *Adam*.

Reading about a woman giving birth brings to mind *Miryam*, Yeshua's mother. The Book of Luke tells us that she was totally obedient to the commands of *Torah*. *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 Bethlehem 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 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 done in *Beit Lechem* where *Yosef* had gone to be registered. And *Miryam* and the family remained in there in Bethlehem for a total of forty days after Yeshua's birth in obedience to the *Torah* command. *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 a couple of different things going on in these verses. We see that *Miryam's* time of purification had ended, but Yeshua is also identified as a firstborn son which also had a requirement. Yeshua had to be presented to ADONAI for redemption. Leviticus 12 tells us what was required to happen with regard to her cleansing, but we have to look elsewhere to find out about the redemption of the firstborn. ADONAI introduced the principle of the firstborn in Exodus 13 prior to the Exodus, but Numbers 3 tells us how it was done: *45 "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"* (Numbers 3:45-48 TLV). What this means is 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 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. This was what the males of the other tribes owed for having the Levites serve ADONAI in their place. A number of years ago, a man came to me at the *synagogue* and said that he wanted to redeem his firstborn son. I explained to him that I wasn't a *kohen*, but he said: "you'll do" and he handed me five silver dollars and left. They are still among the artifacts of the *synagogue* today. 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.* But, the two birds, the sacrifice allowed for the poor, were for the cleansing from *Miryam's* uncleanness as specified in Leviticus 12:8.

There is another aspect of Yeshua's calling brought out here which is important. These things which his parents did for him as a child and things which he later did Himself 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 called to be a *kohen*, a priest, according to *Torah*, yet He was a *kohen*. And, to understand this, we go to the Book of Hebrews.

In Hebrews 8 it says: *1 Now here is the main point being said. We do have such a Kohen Gadol (such a High Priest), 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 is 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 (G-d most high). 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 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 and that His priesthood was an eternal priesthood as opposed to the earthly Levitical priesthood limited by their human life span.

A moment ago we read the verses in Hebrews chapter 8 which tell us about Yeshua’s priesthood. We are told in this chapter that as High Priest, Yeshua is seated at the right hand of ADONAI in heaven and there He is the minister of the true Tabernacle. We are also told that if He were on earth He would not be a *kohen* since there are earthly priests called to fill that earthly office, priests who minister in a replica of the true Tabernacle in heaven. Yeshua’s ministry is described as “more excellent” because He is the mediator of a better covenant, a covenant with better promises. The writer of Hebrews also speaks of the New Covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31 in which ADONAI said that He would make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. It would be a covenant which would not be like the covenant made at Mount Sinai which they broke. The New Covenant is mentioned in this chapter, but is it the theme of Hebrews chapter 8? No, I don’t believe is. This chapter is primarily about Yeshua’s priesthood as replacement for the Levitical priesthood. The last verse of this chapter says: *13 In saying “new,” He has treated the first*

as old; but what is being made old and aging is close to vanishing" (Hebrews 8:13 TLV). Most Bibles have added a word here and say new "covenant," but the word covenant is not found in the Greek text. It has been added to support the claim that the First Covenant is about to vanish. There are two questions which we need to answer: 1) at that particular time on the earth, the time of the writing of Hebrews, what is the "new" and 2) what is that described as "old and aging?" It is not readily apparent, particularly when the verse almost always reads "new covenant," but the "new" is the everlasting, eternal priesthood of Yeshua and the "old and aging" is the earthly Levitical priesthood, which at that time was close to disappearing. The First Covenant was not disappearing, just the priestly aspect of it. The Book of Hebrews is thought to have been written sometime in the sixth decade of the 1st century and only a few years before the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE. This fits with the statement about the "first" aging and nearly vanishing. And, that is what happened. The Levitical priesthood vanished when the Temple was destroyed. But, the Covenant made at Sinai did not disappear, only the priesthood component of it. The *Torah* of the First Covenant is still effective for those who receive it, at least, that part of it which can be accomplished without a Tabernacle or Temple. And, it is renewed by the New Covenant through Yeshua's death, a *Torah* which Yeshua declared in Matthew 5:18 would never pass away until heaven and earth pass away. And, that's never!

The ritual purity of *Parasha Tazria* was for a people who met ADONAI in the Tabernacle, a privilege which we don't have today. But, the underlying principle remains. 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. 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. Thereafter, it is up to us. The *Torah* is our guide and it teaches us to walk in the way which ADONAI desires of us. It teaches us to be holy; 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 in this is to repent, to make *t'shuvah* and to seek the ready forgiveness which is available. There is not time to explore it fully today, but *tevillah*, immersion into Messiah Yeshua, is a physical act somehow related to the principle of "cleanness." When we are submerged in *mayim chayim*, living water, we are momentarily not breathing and in this sense we are immersed into Yeshua's death. Also, 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 *metzora*, the one with *tzara'at*.

I want to conclude by looking at Yeshua's sacrificial death as a spiritual parallel and fulfillment of the *Para Adumah*, the red cow (heifer). In making this comparison, one of the first things which we see is that the heifer had to be free from any kind of blemish just as Yeshua was free from sin. There are a number of other similar details which connect Yeshua with the *Parah Adumah*, the Red Heifer.

And, the Red Heifer had a very specific purpose in the days of the Tabernacle and the Temple. Today, it also has a message for us who follow Yeshua. One of the purposes of the ashes of the red heifer was to purify from being defiled by death for those touching a dead body. ADONAI used this picture to emphasize to Israel their holiness; being separated from death and uncleanness and set apart for Him only. In Him was life and being apart from Him was only death. 13 "*Anyone touching the dead body of any man, who does not purify himself, defiles Adonai's Tabernacle, and that person will be cut off from Israel*" (Numbers

19:13a TLV). Yeshua became ritually defiled and impure in His own body by dying and taking our sin in His death. In His death He became a spiritual Red Heifer whose blood was the symbolic ashes which can cleanse us from death and eternal separation from G-d, a separation caused by our uncleanness, our sins.

The Book of Hebrews also seems to connect Yeshua with the Red Heifer: 10 *“We have an altar from which those serving in the tabernacle have no right to eat. 11 For the bodies of those animals—whose blood is brought into the Holies by the kohen gadol as an offering for sin—are burned outside the camp”* (Hebrews 13:10-11 TLV). Burned outside the camp is the key. But, this verse is actually a straight-forward reference to the sin sacrifices of *Yom Kippur* and their blood which was sprinkled on the Ark of the Covenant. The rest of their bodies were taken outside of the camp and burned. These offerings were completely different from other offerings which could be kept in the Tabernacle and eaten. Regarding the actual *Yom Kippur* offerings, the *Torah* says: 27 *“The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp, and their hides, their flesh, and their dung burned with fire”* (Leviticus 16:27 TLV). This confirms that these verses in Hebrews 13, which we just read, are referring to the atonement sacrifices made on *Yom Kippur*. In these *Yom Kippur* sacrifices, we also see a picture of Yeshua who was put to death outside the camp. And, this is where we get the full impact of what the paradox of the Red Heifer is saying to us. It was burned outside the camp in an unclean place, yet its ashes could purify from death. The next verse in Hebrews 13 shows us how Yeshua became a spiritual Red Heifer for us: 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”* (Hebrews 13:12-13 TLV). Yeshua was sacrificed outside the gate, outside the camp, just as was the Red Heifer. There are other verses in the Book of Hebrews which reveal that Yeshua in addition to being our Passover sacrifice, the Passover lamb, is also our *Yom Kippur* sacrifice, the goat whose blood was sprinkled on the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies and whose body was burned outside the camp. You’ll find that in Hebrews chapter 9. And, because Yeshua died outside the camp in a place of uncleanness, He became unclean for us. Through His uncleanness as our spiritual *Parah Adumah*, our spiritual Red Heifer, He has made us clean. He has circumcised the foreskin of our hearts.

If we claim to follow Yeshua, the proof is in our circumcised hearts as revealed in our walk with Him. It’s very important to understand the spiritual implications of the Red Heifer and all of the other things of *Torah* which are a spiritual picture of Yeshua. But, it’s even better that our spiritual walk reflects our circumcised hearts. This is outwardly shown by our becoming more and more like Him. 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 that about *tevillah* and that about the *Parah Adumah* 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 walking, talking, fully committed disciples of Yeshua. And, *Torah* is always here for us to lead us and to guide us. *Sha’ul* summed it up for us: 4 *“For Messiah is the goal of the Torah as a means to righteousness for everyone who keeps trusting”* (Romans 10:4 TLV). *Shabbat shalom!*