



Parashiot Tazria/Metzora

Torah: Leviticus 12:1-15:33

Haftarah: Isaiah 66:1-24

Ketuwim Sh'lichim: Matthew 8:1-4

April 25, 2020

Our *parashiot* today are *Tazria/Metzora*, which mean respectively: “she conceives” and “a person afflicted with *tza’arat*.” In common years like this year, 5780, these two are read together. In leap years, they are read separately. In *Tazria*, Israel is instructed about the purification rituals for mothers following childbirth as well as the procedures for identifying and treating those infected with *tza’arat*, leprosy. In *Metzora*, the purification ritual is described for people and homes afflicted with *tza’arat*. Instructions regarding the emission of bodily fluids are also included. What does all this mean and how does it relate to us today? A very brief answer is that they were types and shadows portrayed in a physical Tabernacle which are still present today in our day with no Tabernacle, but in a spiritual context. Since we have no Tabernacle or Temple today, these laws are inactive as are a great number of the commands of *Torah*. But, the underlying spiritual principles are still very much active and we can learn from them.

We’ll focus on just one today; *tza’arat*. To understand the spiritual meaning, we first must understand the physical law. *Tza’arat* can be translated into English as “skin disease,” a condition which has been called “leprosy.” This is not modern leprosy, Hansen’s Disease, which causes the loss of body parts. Biblical leprosy seems to have been a type of skin rash and some have speculated that it was something similar to psoriasis, an autoimmune disease. In the case of houses, it was thought to be something like mold or mildew. Today, we will consider the spiritual meaning of *tza’arat* and the condition of a *metzora*, a person who was afflicted with that condition. I ask the questions again. Is there a purpose for these laws in Scripture two thousand years after the Temple was destroyed? If there is a purpose, what is their purpose today? There is a very important purpose for our understanding about ADONAI’s laws of *tza’arat* and you will see today how the spiritual application of this condition continues to affect our modern lives.

We never read in the Scripture about anyone dying from *tza’arat*. It caused the person a problem, but they could live with it. But, if it was really harmless and just not nice to look at, why did ADONAI place so much emphasis on how it was to be treated? If we examine Scripture, we find that there were a number of people who had the condition for a long time. 2Kings 15:1-5 describes what happened to King *Azaryah* of Judah (2Kings 15:1-5): He began to rule at age 16, but he didn’t remove the high places. ADONAI was displeased with him and struck him with *tza’arat*. He lived 52 more years with the condition of *tza’arat* until he died. This makes one think that it was not there to cause physical death, but was there for some other purpose. In most cases in Scripture it seemed to be ADONAI’s judgment on a person because of their actions. But even if they were afflicted with *tza’arat*, they could be healed. *Azaryah* was not healed. We are not told why, but can speculate that it was because he continued to defy ADONAI by leaving the high places for idol worship. He did not repent

Another prominent *Torah* personality who was struck with *tza'arat* was *Miryam*, *Moshe's* sister. In Numbers 12 we read about *Miryam* and *Aharon* criticizing Moses because he had married a Cushite woman. And, then they disputed his authority over theirs. 9 *Adonai's anger burned against them, and He left them. 10 When the cloud lifted up from above the Tent, behold, Miriam had tza'arat, like snow! As Aaron turned toward her, behold, she had tza'arat* (Numbers 12:9-10 TLV)! There is no question that ADONAI struck *Miryam* with *tza'arat* and it seemed to be punishment for her criticism of her brother. For some reason Aaron was not struck with *tza'arat*. But, according to *Torah*, *Miryam* was shut out of the camp for 7 days and then was healed and allowed back in.

What we seem to see regarding *Amatzyah* and *Miryam* is that these were not physical sicknesses, but were physical manifestations on their bodies caused by a spiritual condition or an action which was in opposition to ADONAI's nature. *Miryam* was healed of the condition, but *Amatzyah* had to live with it for 52 years. Spiritual perception makes it clear that his *tza'arat* was because he did not correct the problem. Even though he, himself, did not worship on the high places, he appeased the people and did not destroy the high places in Judah. He allowed the people to go to these high places and worship false gods. And, because of this, he bore the marks of his disobedience to ADONAI in his body to be seen by everyone. But, he also had to live in separation. The buck stopped with *Amatzyah*, but he did not accept the responsibility.

On one occasion, Yeshua confronted some Pharisees regarding their misuse of *Torah*. They had accused His disciples of breaking the traditions of the elders by not "ritually" washing their hands before they ate. Yeshua's response to them was that they had changed *Torah* into man-made rules and made the Word of G-d null and void. 10 ..., "Hear and understand. 11 *It's not what goes into the mouth that makes the man unholy; but what comes out of the mouth, this makes the man unholy*" (Matthew 15:10b-11 TLV). This is not about food, but about the spiritual condition of a person. The TLV uses unholy, but we could just as easily insert unclean. Is there a difference? Maybe a gnat's eyebrow's difference, but they essentially mean the same. Unclean is what the leper had to cry out in order to keep other people away. Unclean! Unclean! *Torah* says: 45 "The one with *tza'arat* who has the plague-mark shall wear torn clothes, the hair of his head is to hang loose, he is to cover his upper lip and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean'" (Leviticus 13:45-46 TLV)! The *metzora*, an who was unclean, a person with *tza'arat*, was also unholy because he was unable to participate in Tabernacle service. He could not offer a sacrifice, but had to remain outside the camp until he was declared clean. If a sacrifice couldn't make him clean, what would?

In Matthew 15 Yeshua explained his words to the Pharisees to his disciples. 19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, and slander. 20 *These are the things that make the man unholy (unclean); but to eat with unwashed hands does not make the man unholy (unclean)*" (Matthew 15:19-20 TLV). Eating without ritual handwashing, a law added to *Torah* by the Pharisees, doesn't make a person unclean. But, the spiritual things, the wicked thoughts and wicked actions coming out of a person's heart do!

Yeshua listed a number of things which can cause a person to be unclean. He said "wicked thoughts." Yes, we have them. He said "murder- actual murder and wish to murder." We may not have actually murdered someone, but, yes, we have these thoughts. He said "adultery- by thought and action." Yes, we are guilty. Theft, lies and slanders; guilty again! Slanders is what the ancient rabbis called *lashon hara*, the evil tongue, and what we know

as gossip or tale telling, sometimes innocent and sometimes malicious, but *lashon hara* all the same. They focused on it as the primary cause of *tza'arat* in those days.

We don't have widespread physical manifestation of *tza'arat* today or if we even have it as all. But consider this question: is the spiritual condition of *tza'arat* prevalent in the Body of Messiah today? I think you would agree with me that it is. Even though we don't have physical *tza'arat*, we do have what appears to be its spiritual manifestation among us today. It's a problem in the body of Messiah today, but also are the other sins which Yeshua mentioned: evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft and false witness, lying. These things are conditions of the heart. As Yeshua's body, we have spiritual heart disease. In the body are many with unrepented sins. Pray for them, that they might confess and repent, make *t'shuvah*, and return to full standing with Yeshua. You and I are not judge. Yeshua is the only judge. But, first we must remove the beam from our own eye. Then we can call them to account if we have knowledge of their sins and they are a part of our body. If we fail to do that, their sin is upon us. We cannot overlook sin.

Yeshua, speaking of certain of the Pharisees, said: 8 *'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me'* (Matthew 15:8 TLV). That word is for us today! We must examine our hearts and make sure that our hearts are circumcised! How did the ancient Israelites outside the camp become healed? The cure for *tzara'at* is repentance. They had to repent! And, they had to confess. We can't just say we won't do it again. We must say: "forgive me." We must turn away from the evil things in our hearts and make *t'shuvah* so that we can be healed. We need to come back into the camp, back into our fellowship of believers, spiritually cleansed and able to offer spiritual sacrifices to ADONAI. I'm not speaking about those without salvation, but about those of us who have trusted Yeshua.

Yes, those who don't know Yeshua as Messiah are also outside of the camp, but in a different way. Speaking of a *metzora*, 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). That's where we all were before we knew Yeshua as our Messiah. We were unclean and outside of the camp of holiness. When we trusted Yeshua we were brought back into the camp and given access to holy things. Yeshua, the Son of G-d, who He, Himself, was completely holy, went outside the holy camp into the unclean unholy place where we were. He came out to us because we couldn't go in to Him. And by His sacrifice outside the camp on the stake, 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). Outside the camp was a place of defilement, a place of uncleanness, corruption, condemnation, rejection and punishment. The writer of Hebrews says that Yeshua was outside the camp. Our subject today is *tza'arat*. Was Yeshua spiritually a leper? If He bore all our diseases, He was. The ancient rabbis saw one in the Scriptures whom they called the "leper Messiah." <10> Isaiah 53 hints at this: 4 *Surely He has borne our griefs (sicknesses) and carried our pains. Yet we esteemed Him stricken, struck by God, and afflicted* (Isaiah 53:4 TLV). By being struck and afflicted, was Yeshua was made a spiritual leper for us? Yes. He took all of our sins upon His body. But although He was the Son of G-d, Yeshua willingly accepted the condition of "leper" and bore these afflictions.

The passage above in Hebrews 13 tells us that Yeshua was outside the camp. In verse 13 we are told: 13 *So let us go to Him outside the camp, bearing His disgrace*. Does this just

apply for those who have not yet trusted Yeshua or does it also apply to us who are already in covenant with Him? And, what does it mean for us to go outside the camp to Him? There is a paradox here. Inside the camp was cleanness, but we have to go outside the camp to the place of uncleanness to become clean. To share His disgrace we must go where He is in order to receive salvation and also spiritual healing if we're already saved. Even though Yeshua is the King of Israel sitting at the right hand of the Father and waiting to return and claim His Kingdom, He is still outside the camp in disgrace, "struck by G-d and afflicted," as it says in Isaiah 53:4, for those of us who need Him. And, we all need Him. It is in Him that we find our spiritual healing. Yeshua became our sacrifice outside the camp and that is where we must go to identify with Him. In the days of the Tabernacle, the *metzora* was outside the camp and unclean, but for us today it is reversed. We must go outside the camp to Yeshua in order to become clean.

One of Rabbi Herb's favorite stories is about *Na'aman*, the general of the army of Aram. He suffered from *tza'arat* and he heard that the prophet in *Shomron* could heal him. The Prophet *Elisha* sent him a message: "*Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored, and you will be clean*" (2Kings 5:10b TLV). *Na'aman* became angry but his servants went to him and said: 13 ... "*My father, if the prophet had told you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he told you only to 'Wash and be clean'*" (2Kings 5:13b TLV). So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan River as he had been commanded and his skin was restored and he became clean. What was it that made *Na'aman* clean? It was his obedience, his repentance from his evil thoughts about what he was told to do.

The whole Body of Messiah is at a critical place today and we must all examine ourselves. We have *all* sinned. And what better time to do it than now? Whether or not we believe the Coronavirus is G-d's judgement on the earth, we are not blind. The earth is filled with spiritual corruption and our own United States is no exception. I don't have to quote the statistics to you. The disdain for things of G-d is among the people all around us. And, much of it is within the body of Messiah. Yeshua is saying- "Come back to me. Turn back and take up again your first love." Each of us must return to that time and place when we first placed our trust in Yeshua and committed our all to Him! We have all fallen short of the glory of G-d. Even though we know Yeshua as Messiah, many of us have unrepented sin in our lives. Let us examine ourselves. King David thought he had gotten away with his affair with *Bat Shevah*, but ADONAI had shown Nathan the Prophet his sin and he confronted him. David said: 3 "*Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your mercy. According to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 4 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 5 For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. 6 Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are just when You speak, and blameless when You judge*" (Psalms 51:3-6 TLV). We don't have Nathan the Prophet in our lives today, but we do have the Holy Spirit. Each of us knows very well when we have unrepented sin. Yeshua is waiting for our sincere repentance and desires to forgive us. Our goal must be to be spiritually clean before Him every day by examining ourselves daily and praying for forgiveness. David continued his prayer in Psalm 51: 19 "*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise*" (Psalm 51:19 TLV). Yeshua is calling us to turn back to Him and we must have the sincere heart of David. Yeshua is calling us to have broken spirits before Him, broken and contrite hearts.

Yeshua's body is at a crossroad today. And, it is clear that at this time ADONAI is speaking to us. Will we continue straight through the intersection on our old path or will we make the turn to the right and back to Him. The signs are all around us. Israel is once again a nation. Read the second half of our *Haftarah* reading for today, specifically Isaiah 66, verses 7-14, which prophesied its restoration as a nation. Since 1967, Jerusalem is no longer trodden underfoot of the Gentiles as prophesied by Yeshua in Luke 21 verse 24b. The rabbis in Israel believe that Messiah is at the door and they are all in deep repentance. The secular government of Israel is in turmoil. The world is in turmoil. We must recognize the signs of the times.

What is it that is necessary for us, the members of Yeshua's body today, to be in complete obedience to Him. The greatest thing we lack is unity. And, the basic cause of our disunity is our separation. He has called us to be one and we are far from one. His body is so divided that it is not recognizable as the one described in Scripture. A lack of unity is also keeping us from the revival which we all so desperately wish for.

It is time for the shepherds to act. The responsibility is not on the sheep, but the shepherds. ADONAI holds us responsible. He said through Jeremiah: *21 For the shepherds are stupid! They have not sought Adonai. Therefore they have not acted wisely and all their flocks are scattered*" (Jeremiah 10:21 TLV). The *p'shat*, the plain meaning of this is directed to the shepherds of the Kingdom of Judah who were under siege and facing the threat of exile to Babylon. But, it can apply in every generation to the shepherds of Israel, and very specifically to the shepherds of Yeshua's body today. We are stupid! Yeshua has commanded us to be one but we continue to build our own fiefdoms and protect our own turf. We make no effort to be one unless they are like us.

Our doctrines divide us. They are the basic problem. But, there is no way that the shepherds can deal with the doctrine problem. We're too far apart. We can't work it out. But, there is one thing we can do just by making a simple decision. With G-d's help, we can decide to be one. We don't have to work out the details, we just have to do it. Yeshua said: *20 "I pray not on behalf of these only, but also for those who believe in Me through their message, 21 that they all may be one. Just as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You, so also may they be one in Us, so the world may believe that You sent Me"* (John 17:21 TLV). Yeshua wants denomination A, denomination B and Messianic Jewish synagogue C to be one. It doesn't matter that they don't interpret the Scripture the same way. In these verses, He also gave us the answer as to why the world does not believe in Him. It is because we are not one. In other words, He said: "if you are one, the world will believe that the Father sent me. Yeshua also said: *34 "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you must love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:34-35 TLV). Sure, we love each other within our congregation and many outside it as long as they're not too different from us.

Here's a question for you. Have you ever considered the possibility that our divisions are a test from above? What if ADONAI is testing us like He tested Job? He has given us a command and we're not doing anything about it. How long will He wait for us to be the shepherds He's called us to be? Will we be as righteous as Job?

The problem is not our differences. The problem is that we don't accept our differences. Yeshua has given us permission to be different; to interpret things differently. In Matthew 16, He and His disciples were in Caesarea Philippi when He posed them a question: "who do

people say that the Son of Man is?” He got various answers from them. His next question was directed to them: “who do you say that I am?” *Shimon Kefa*, Simon Peter, quickly answered: “you are the *Mashiach, Ben Elohim*. You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living G-d.” There is a lot more here than meets the eye. Yeshua was using *remez*, hinting back at another Scripture to make a point. Peter understood it and that’s how he got his answer. He saw in his mind the vision of Daniel 7 where One like a Son of Man came into the presence of the Ancient of Days. Yeshua blessed him for his answer and said that he did not learn that from men but through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What *Kefa* saw in that vision was the establishment of Yeshua’s authority as given directly from the Father. *14 Dominion, glory and sovereignty were given to Him that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will never pass away, and His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed* (Daniel 7:14 TLV). And then Yeshua said: *18 “And I also tell you that you are Peter, and upon this rock (the rock of the truth which Peter just revealed) I will build My community; and the gates of Sheol will not overpower it”* (Matthew 16:18 TLV). Yeshua has built His community of believers upon the authority given to Him by the Father. And, He has passed some of that authority on to us, His shepherds. He said: *19 “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will have been forbidden in heaven and what you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven”* (Matthew 16:19 TLV). There are modern interpretations of this Scripture and how binding and loosing works. But, there is an ancient interpretation as well and it is the one to which Yeshua was referring. It was in use by the Israelites many generations before Yeshua. To bind and to loose simply means to forbid by an indisputable authority or to permit by an indisputable authority. The authority could have been synagogue leadership or even the Sanhedrin. In this case of binding or loosing, the indisputable authority is Yeshua. And He has given leaders in His body that same authority over their theological decisions. He wishes for us to interpret Scripture and then present it to our flocks as our best understanding of truth.

We should not fear each other because of doctrines. We should fear Him who has given us one simple command, to be one. I don’t believe Yeshua is concerned that we have different understandings of the Scripture. He will take care of that. Our job is to be one, to love each other with a love from heaven, regardless of our differences.

Bringing all if the different isms together theologically is impossible for man, but not for G-d. I was praying about this several weeks ago and a word came into my mind: assimilation. I had an idea of what it meant. When I looked it up, I found that its best definition for what we are talking about is this: the process of taking in and fully understanding information or ideas. As in the assimilation of knowledge. And then, came the words: spiritual assimilation or assimilation from on high. The point I’m making is that if we do what Yeshua has asked us to do, He will do the rest. The Holy Spirit will bring us into theological unity through spiritual assimilation. It will be so natural that we won’t even notice. It won’t happen quickly and maybe not completely until Yeshua returns and teaches us directly.

The time is now. Everything is in place for the body of Yeshua to come into unity. But, the burden is on the shepherds. Shepherds, as Jeremiah said: “don’t be stupid.” The handwriting is on the wall. Let’s put aside our jealousies and our competitions and our fear of those who are not completely like us and say: “yes, I accept you in Yeshua’s love.” We can’t fix our theological problems, but we can love each other. It’s a decision of the will. We can do it. Let’s do it. *Shabbat shalom!*

