

Being Conscious of Hidden Sin and Overcoming

In weeks reading from Parashat Metzora (*Vayikra / Leviticus 14:1-15:33*), the Torah teaches us more on the mitzvot of Tzaraat (צָרַעַת). The translation for the word Leprosy comes from the Greek word “*Lepra*” (λέπρα) and is described as a contagious bacterial disease characterized by ulcerations of the skin, a loss of sensation (nerve damage) and sever deformities. We learned last week that the rabbis understand Tzaraat as something that is not described in the medical books, but is related to a hidden sin that comes forth and makes itself known on the surface of one’s body. In the Scriptures, this disease was regarded as a direct infliction by God (see *2 Kings 5:7* and *2 Chronicles 26:20*) an awful punishment from the Lord for hidden sin. The disease eats the inward parts, the bones, swelling of the skin, sores, the whole body is rotting and in Yeshua’s day this was considered a slow lingering death sentence. It is also interesting how these mitzvot on Tzaraat are found in close proximity to Yom Kippur.

ספר ויקרא פרק טו *Vayikra / Leviticus 15:1-5*

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-
 אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: ב דַּבְּרוּ אֶל-
 בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֲלֵהֶם
 אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי יִהְיֶה זָב מִבְּשָׁרוֹ
 זָבוּ טִמְאָה הוּא: ג וְזֹאת תִּהְיֶה
 טִמְאָתוֹ כְּזָבוֹ רַר בְּשָׁרוֹ אֶת-
 זָבוֹ אוֹ-הִחֲתִים בְּשָׁרוֹ מִזָּבוֹ
 טִמְאָתוֹ הוּא: ד כָּל-הַמְּשֻׁכָּב
 אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב עָלָיו הִזָּב יִטְמָא
 וְכָל-הַכְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-יִשָּׁב עָלָיו
 יִטְמָא: ה וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִגַּע
 בְּמְשֻׁכָּבוֹ יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרִחַץ
 בַּמַּיִם וְטִמְאָ עַד-הָעֶרֶב: *15:1 The Lord also spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, 15:2 ‘Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, ‘When any man has a discharge from his body, his discharge is unclean. 15:3 ‘This, moreover, shall be his uncleanness in his discharge: it is his uncleanness whether his body allows its discharge to flow or whether his body obstructs its discharge. 15:4 ‘Every bed on which the person with the discharge lies becomes unclean, and everything on which he sits becomes unclean. 15:5 ‘Anyone, moreover, who touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening; (NASB)*

The Scriptures in *Vayikra / Leviticus 15:1-5* speak of one who has a discharge from his skin (זָב מִבְּשָׁרוֹ), a leaking, seeping flow that will not

stop. Such a person is considered Tamei (unclean). Note the significance of the uncleanness when the Torah states, **ד כָּל-הַמְּשֻׁכָּב אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב עָלָיו יִטְמָא: 15:4** *‘Every bed on which the person with the discharge lies becomes unclean, and everything on which he sits becomes unclean. (NASB)* This draws in the context of laying down (יִשְׁכַּב), the one who lays with another is synonymous to becoming one with another. (*Bereshit / Genesis 2:24*). The sitting (יִשֵּׁב), the one who sits with another is synonymous to taking counsel in agreement (see *Tehillim / Psalms 1*). The spiritual implications for the one who has a seeping discharge are revealed in these comments on the person who is Tamei.

The Rabbis have the following to say concerning these verses:

Rashi on Leviticus 15:2:1:

כי יהיה זב *WHEN THERE BE A RUNNING ISSUE — One might think if there be a running issue from any portion of his body (e. g., ear, nose) he shall be unclean! Therefore it states מבשרו “from his flesh” (i.e. from some part of his flesh) and not from all parts of his flesh (the prefix מ is a partitive מ). Now, however, that Scripture has made a difference between one part of his flesh and another part of his flesh, I have the right to draw a conclusion: it (the Torah) pronounces uncleanness in a case of a man with a running issue (זב) and it pronounces uncleanness in a particular case of a woman with a running issue (זבה). How is it in the case of a זבה? Through that place in her body where she becomes unclean with a lighter uncleanness, viz., that of a נדה, she also becomes unclean with a more stringent uncleanness i.e. through זיבה, a continuance of the issue beyond the usual period! Similarly the זב: through the place where he becomes unclean with a lighter uncleanness, viz., קרי, (an involuntary emission of semen which makes him unclean only until evening; cf. v. 16), he also becomes unclean through a more stringent uncleanness, viz., זיבה (when he is unclean seven days and must bring a sacrifice; cf. vv. 13 ff. with 16 ff.; from the latter it*

is evident which part of the body is in question; it follows logically that the same part is here intended) (Sifra). (כי יהיה זב. יכול זב מכל מקום יהא טמא, ת"ל מבפשו, — ולא כל בפשו. אחר שהלק הפתוב בין בשר לבשר זכיתי לדיו, טמא בזב וטמא בזבה, מה זבה ממקום שהיא מטמאה טמאה קלה — "גדה" — מטמאה טמאה תמורה — "זיבה" — אף הזב ממקום שטמא (טמאה קלה) — "קרי" — מטמא טמאה תמורה — "זיבה" (שם):

Rashi makes a distinction saying *“from his flesh”* refers to some part of the body as opposed to all parts of the body. The point is that the man who has a running issue that does not go away, he is pronounced unclean. He compares the woman during Niddah as a lighter issue as opposed to the *זב מבפשו* the discharge. A woman moves to a more stringent uncleanness with her issue moves from Niddah to a זיבה, the continuance of the issue beyond the usual monthly period. For the less stringent issue one becomes unclean for a certain specified period of time. This may be paralleled with sin and repentance. The more stringent issue leads to the requirement of bringing a sacrifice, which is related to sin. This may be related to unrepentant sin and/or the one who is in unrepentant sin. Note how sin is said to be the reason for Tzaraat, that which is hidden within comes forth and is made known on the outside. The body is corrupted from the inside out and the Lord makes known this hidden sin.

The Mishnah Nazir has the following to say:

Mishnah Nazir 9:4

Initially, any doubt about negaim (diseased patches on skin, clothes, or houses that create impurity) is [ruled as] pure as long as it has not been declared impure. Once it is declared impure, doubts about it are [ruled as] impure. We investigate a zav (a male who has certain types of atypical genital discharges, which render him impure) about seven categories before he is declared as having discharge: about food, drink, lifting, jumping, sickness, visual stimuli, and thoughts. From the time he is declared as having discharge, we do not investigate him. His accidental [discharges], doubtful [discharges], and seminal discharges



are [considered] impure because the matter has a leg on which to stand. One who hits his fellow and they estimate that he will die, and then he improves from what was: If after that it degrades and he dies, he [the one who struck] is liable. Rabbi Nechemia says, “He is exempt because the matter has a leg on which to stand”.

The Mishnah speaks of negaim (נגעים) a reference to diseased patches on the skin, cloths, or mold in houses, etc. Note the order of these things, the skin, the cloths, and the house. The impurity in a home may be hidden for a period of time before people start becoming sick. This type of impurity will eventually become known, but there is a remedy, the infected parts may be discarded and replaced (repentance and walking in God’s ways). The impurity on cloths also is a reference to impurity that may be discarded. The impurity in one’s skin however is something only the Lord God himself is able to heal. Once these impurities, (negaim, נגעים) are ruled upon as unclean, they are regarded as Tzaraat rendering the person, cloths, or house as impure. The Mishnah makes a distinction between the greater and the lesser impurity. The important point that make be drawn from the rabbis is the nature of impurity in relation to the hidden sin in our lives.

Megillah, the tenth Tractate of Mishnah, states the following:

Mishnah Megillah 8a, 33

“And the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord from his issue” (Leviticus 15:15); [From his issue] implies that zavim bring a sacrifice and some zavim do not bring a sacrifice. (ויקרא טו, טו) וכפר עליו הכהן לפני ה' מזובו. (מקצת זבין מביאין קרבן ומקצת זבין אין מביאין קרבן)

The rabbis say according to the Torah that some Zavim require a sacrifice and others do not. This appears to be a reoccurring theme with the idea of various levels of Zavim are implied in the Torah text. Hidden sin today may be compared to immorality or Lashon Hara in modern times. For God’s people, there is a call to morality within the community and within the house of God. As in the disease of Tzaraat, Zavim may be the result

of some inner impurity coming forth to the outside being made known. The extent of one's sin and resulting Zavim will determine whether one is to bring a sacrifice or not.

Midrash Rabbah Vayikra on Parashat Metzora (Chapter 16-18, פרשה טז-יח) speaks extensively on Tzaraat and Lashon Harah, the evil tongue (gossip). Again this concept of an inward uncleanness that God is causing to show forth on the outside as Tzaraat. According to Parashat Tazria and Metzora, there is no sacrifice that could be brought that is capable of making the one afflicted with Tzaraat clean before the Lord. The sin in this persons life was so great, the one inflicted of the disease must completely trust in the Lord God Almighty for the forgiveness of his or her sins. Note the sacrifices that one brings are to be done following the healing of the disease of Tzaraat. Right standing and renewed fellowship with the Lord could only occur after the Lord had forgiven and healed a person. This presents us with a key Torah principle that the Lord desires for our lives, which is mercy and obedience rather than sacrifice (*1 Samuel 15:22*). The one stricken with Tzaraat needs to be both forgiven for his sins and healed of the disease by the Lord God Almighty prior to bringing a sacrifice. The disease of Tzaraat illustrates for us that the sacrifices were not meant to be performed to “earn” the forgiveness of sins. Many Christian commentaries suggest the sacrifices were meant to take away sin which is a work of the flesh (*see Gill's Exposition on Isaiah 55:7 for an example*). Studying the Torah on the sacrifices, specifically in the opening chapters of *Vayikra / Leviticus 1-6*, reveals to us that a sacrifice was to be brought “*if one sinned,*” and so the intention was the Lord did not want His people to sin. If one had “*intentionally*” sinned before God, there was no sacrifice that could be brought. The person who “*intentionally*” sins needed to repent and trust the our Father in Heaven would forgive him. With these things in mind, the rabbis of blessed memory struggled with the idea of how God forgives those stricken with Tzaraat and conclude this would be the work of the Messiah according to the Talmud.

Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 98b

“Rab said: The world was created only on David's account . Samuel said: On Moses account; R. Johanan said: For the sake of the Messiah. What is his [the Messiah's] name? — The School of R. Shila said: His name is Shiloh, for

it is written, until Shiloh come. The School of R. Yannai said: His name is Yinnon, for it is written, His name shall endure for ever: e'er the sun was, his name is Yinnon. The School of R. Haninah maintained: His name is Haninah, as it is written, Where I will not give you Haninah. Others say: His name is Menahem the son of Hezekiah, for it is written, Because Menahem [‘the comforter’], that would relieve my soul, is far. The Rabbis said: His name is ‘the leper scholar,’ as it is written, Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God, and afflicted.” (אמר רב לא אברי) עלמא אלא לדוד ושמואל אמר למשה ורבי יוחנן אמר למשיח מה שמו דבי רבי שילא אמרי שילה שמו שנאמר (בראשית מט, י) עד כי יבא שילה דבי רבי ינאי אמרי ינון שמו שנאמר (תהלים עב, יז) יהי שמו לעולם לפני שמש ינון שמו דבי רבי חנינה אמר חנינה שמו שנאמר (ירמיהו טז, יג) אשר לא אתן לכם חנינה ויש אומרים מנחם בן חזקיה שמו שנאמר (איכה א, טז) כי רחק ממני מנחם משיב נפשי ורבנן אמרי חיורא דבי רבי שמו שנאמר (ישעיהו נג, ד) אכן חליינו הוא נשא ומכאובינו סבלם ואנחנו חשבנוהו נגוע מוכה (אלהים ומעונה)

Since the disease of Tzaraat was something only the Lord God Almighty could heal, the rabbis say the Anointed One (Mashiach) would need to help those stricken with Tzaraat. The Talmud describes the rabbi's asking the question, *“when will the Messiah come?”* and *“By what sign may I recognize him?”* Elijah tells the rabbi to go to the gate of the city where he will find the Messiah sitting among the poor lepers. Remember the city gate is a place of respect, power, and politics. The phrase *“poor lepers”* could be a reference to sinners, as opposed to literal *“lepers.”* According to the Sages, the Messiah would be a Cohen (Priest) that would bear our grief, carry our iniquity and sorrows, and be smitten of God and afflicted. There seem to be parallels to Moshe from Parashat Ki Tisa (*Shemot / Exodus 30:11-34:35*) and *Isaiah 53* with regard to the man smitten and afflicted. Is it possible that the Chief priests and elders in Yeshua's day knew of these sayings in the first century? It is also apparent that the lawyers and leaders in Yeshua's day were unwilling to recognize the various messianic

prophecies in the Tanakh and refused to recognize the declaration of who Yeshua was in the healing of these persons stricken with Tzaraat.

In the Apostolic Writings, when Yeshua healed ten lepers, he was declaring in the act of healing that God was present. The healing of the leper was a clear sign that the one spoken of in the Torah as the prophet that would follow Moshe (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 18*) had come “*The Messiah has come!*” Yeshua healing lepers is found in *Matthew 8:2-3*, *Mark 1:40-42*, and *Luke 17:11-19*. In *Luke 17:11-19*, while Yeshua was on his way to Jerusalem and passing between Samaria and Galilee he met 10 lepers. The Lepers raised their voices saying *17:13* “... ‘*Yeshua, Master, have mercy on us!*’” Yeshua told the lepers to go and show themselves to the Cohanim (Priests) and as they went they were healed, cleansed of the disease as they made their way to show themselves to the Cohen. As these 10 Lepers acted in faith, the Lord God healed them of their disease of Tzaraat. Based upon the text it appears the men (i) believed Yeshua was able to heal them and (ii) they needed to act upon their faith even though the Tzaraat remained upon their bodies physically. The work of believing and then physically doing what the Lord instructs us to do are integrally connected. This is a parallel to entering into the covenant of God by faith, and then living a life of faith according to the Torah. Because they were obeying Yeshua to show themselves to the priests, as the Torah commands, they were doing a righteous work. The question is, did their healing come by their own hands (by their works), or by the power of God? Their moving by faith to show their bodies, even though there remained the sign of Tzaraat, glorified the name of the Lord and God healed them. Obeying God’s Torah is the way we glorify the name of the Lord God in heaven and Yeshua the Messiah!

According to Parashat Metzora, the ritual cleansing process required the rigorous procedure of inspection and blood atonement as described in the Torah. Note again that these sacrifices come after having been forgiven of their sin and having been healed. According to the Scriptures in *Vayikra / Leviticus 14:2-3* וְהוּבֵא בַּיּוֹם טָהַרְתּוּ וְהוּבֵא אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן: אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן אֶל-מַחֲוִיץ אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן וְהָיָה נִרְפָּא נֶגְעֵ-הַצָּרְעַת מִן-הַצָּרוּעַ: ד וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וְלָקַח לְמַטְהַר שְׁתֵּי-צִפְרִים חַיִּים טְהוֹרִים וְעַץ אֶרְזוֹ וּשְׁנֵי תוֹלְעוֹת: 14:2 *This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. Now he shall be brought to the priest, 14:3 and the priest shall go out to*

the outside of the camp. Thus the priest shall look, and if the infection of leprosy has been healed in the leper (NASB). The person with Tzaraat is to meet the Cohen (Priest) half way. Yeshua sent the lepers to show their bodies to the Cohen because the first step of acting in faith is crucial for a believer. It is only when we sincerely return to the Lord and act upon our faith that He will take care of our problem of impurity, uncleanness, and sin. This is also applicable to the hidden sin in our lives. We must take action to overcome the our stumbling blocks and seek the Lord to empower us to not return to our wicked ways. Tzaraat is a spiritual malady that requires spiritual discernment to both diagnose and treat. When someone was found to have Tzaraat, they were forced to leave the community and undergo a period of mourning and Teshuvah (repentance). Before the leper is reintegrated into the community of believers, he must undergo inspection and be kept aside for seven days and then reexamined, and only then is the person allowed to return to the community.

According to the Apostolic writings, Yeshua healed 10 lepers, he showed himself to be the Messiah, having both the power to forgive sins and to set one free from the bondage of sin and death. He pointed continually to the Torah instructing those healed of Tzaraat to show themselves to the Cohen and make the necessary offerings prescribed in the Torah as a testimony to Moshe and to the people. This week's Torah Portion reminds us of the importance of eliminating the hidden sin in our lives. Hidden sin is an uncleanness and impurity in our lives on the inside which is also apparent to God on the outside. The impurity and uncleanness of sin in our lives effects our walk before the Lord. Have you inspected your life, the uncleanliness of your heart, and sought forgiveness in the Messiah Yeshua to clean you from all unrighteousness? Hidden sin is a spiritual disease. What Lord really wants from us is to realize our mistakes and return to Him. He wants to be compassionate towards us. Therefore, take your thoughts captive. Let's end with the words of Paul to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

10:3 "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 10:4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 10:5 We are destroying speculations and

every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of YHVH, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Messiah, 10:6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”

The obedience of Messiah is synonymous to the way in which He walked, obedient to the Word of God. Paul says we are to do the same. Let's Pray!



