

פרשת
תזריע מצרע
Parshiyot Tazria / Metzora

Vayikra / Leviticus 12:1-15:33, 2 Kings 7:3-20
Mark 9:14-50 / Luke 9:51-10:42

The Call to Self Inspection

This weeks double portion (Parshiyot Tazria Metzora) speaks of the most awful of skin diseases that leads to a man being unclean before both God and man, and not able to come into God's presence or into the community of people. The rabbis have said that this disease is due to the sin that is on the inside of a man that comes forth and is manifested on one's outside for all to see. It is only the Lord God Almighty who is able to heal from this sort of defilement and make one clean. Accordingly, when the Lord has healed someone from this disease, we read the priest doing the following, והביא אתם ביום השמיני לטהרתו *14:23 On the eighth day of his cleansing he shall bring them to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, before the LORD.* ולקח הכהן את־כבש האשם ואת־לג השמן *14:24 The priest shall take the lamb of guilt offering and the log of oil, and elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD.* ושחט את־כבש האשם ולקח הכהן מדם האשם ונתן *14:25 When the lamb of guilt offering has been slaughtered, the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the ridge of the right ear of the one being cleansed, on the thumb of his right*

hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. על־כף. וּמִן־הַשֶּׁמֶן יִצַק הַכֹּהֵן וְהָיָה
 14:26 *The priest shall then pour some of the oil into
 the palm of his own left hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.* וְהָיָה
 14:27 *band with the finger of
 his right hand the priest shall sprinkle some of the oil that is in the palm
 of his left hand seven times before the LORD.* וְנָתַן הַכֹּהֵן מִן־הַשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר
 עַל־כַּף עַל־תְּנוּךְ אֹזֶן הַמִּטְהַר וְעַל־בֶּהֶן יָדוֹ הַיְמָנִית וְעַל־בֶּהֶן רַגְלוֹ
 14:28 *Some of the oil in his palm shall be
 put by the priest on the ridge of the right ear of the one being cleansed,
 on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, over
 the same places as the blood of the guilt offering;* וְהִנּוּתָר מִן־הַשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר
 14:29 *and what is
 left of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one be-
 ing cleansed, to make expiation for him before the LORD.* Based upon
 these Scriptures, what is the significance of the priest bringing the lamb
 of God as an offering for the cleansing of the leper? Rashi on Vayikra
 / Leviticus 14:23 Part 1 states the following, “*ON
 THE EIGHTH DAY OF HIS BEING PRONOUNCED CLEAN — i. e.
 the eighth day after the birds have been brought and he has been sprin-
 kled with the cedar stick, the hyssop and the crimson wool (cf. v. 10).*”
 Rashi is answering the question following the eighth day of his being
 pronounced clean implies that this day, the eighth day from when the
 birds were brought, he is pure. However, it is on the eighth day that one
 brings the birds for the offering, after which he is pronounced clean.
 Read carefully here, Rashi is saying it is eight days after the birds were
 brought that is considered the purification. (*Seftei ChaKhamim on Va-
 yikra / Leviticus 14:23 Part 1*) Note the parallels to the eighth day brit
 milah and the child entering into the covenant of God’s people. The
 Scriptures say “*On the eighth day of his cleansing, he shall bring a
 lamb of guilt...*” Notice how Rashi does not explain anything at this
 point and the reason being, it says earlier “*He must remain, outside
 of his tent, for seven days.*” This disease has significant physical and
 spiritual implications and thus causing the man to remain outside for
 seven days prior to his entering back into the community of God’s peo-
 ple. Note the severity of the disease of Tzaraat. It begins with little
 nodules which go on to ulcerate. The ulcers develop a foul smelling

discharge. The eyebrows fall off, the vocal cords become ulcerated and the voice becomes horse, the breath wheezes and the hands and feet ulcerate. Slowly the human body becomes a mass of growing ulcers. The average length of this type of Tzaraat is 9 years ending in mental decay, coma, and death. There is damage that occurs to the nervous system losing sensation in the hands and feet. The muscles waste away, tendons contract, with the ulcerations follows the progressive loss of fingers and toes until the entire hand and foot drops off. The duration of this type of Tzaraat is 20-30 years. The disease of Tzaraat is a progressive death where a man dies inch by inch and is often called "*Hansen's disease*." This disease is a good illustration for the nature of sin as sin slowly eats away at a person leaving him in a progressively worse condition as time goes on when one does not seek God's help. Note the Torah portion also mentions "*He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp*." This person is put under judgment ceremonially, relationally, and even down to the core of his being. His clothes are rent in response to the fact of mourning over the death that has made a home in his life and body. He is defiled because he is unclean and further he must live outside of relationship and fellowship with man and God. There is no fellowship between the one with Tzaraat and the company of the people of God. This is the illustration of sin in our lives. Now when the miraculous happens, when the Lord God Almighty sets a man free from sin, in the Torah portion from Tzaraat, he is declared clean by the lamb of God and fellowship is restored in the two birds. This fellowship with the people and with God include the gifts of the animal sacrifices which are brought the guilt offering, the sin offering, the meal offerings, all of these offerings are described just prior to this text in order to stress the fact that there also must be fellowship with God. And so the gifts that are mentioned here are the gifts that make it possible for not just the one with Tzaraat to have communion with God, but also for all those who are stricken by sin to have fellowship with the Lord God as well. And so the imagery we receive here of the one stricken with Tzaraat, this person who was dead, defiled, out of fellowship with men and God, is now through a miracle of God made clean, and through the atoning his life and relationships are established. He is set free from sin and death. These things led to the apostolic interpretation on the significance of the lamb of God be-

ing offered for the cleansing of the one with Tzaraat which describes each and every one of us. Yeshua the Messiah is described within this context on the miraculous and atoning work of God. This is why we have recorded in the Apostolic Writings, a man full of leprosy coming to Yeshua and begged on his knees, *“If you are willing, you can make me clean...”* It is in this way Yeshua is described as the lamb of God (*John 1:29*) who takes away the sins of the world. There are important parallels between this week’s Torah portion and ourselves in the Messiah Yeshua! The rabbis taught sin leads to Tzaraat. We read in the Torah portion, *“and the priest shall take one he lamb, and offer him for a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and wave them for a wave offering before the LORD: A trespass-offering.”* This is to teach us that sin was the cause of Tzaraat, and of all diseases, and that these ceremonial observations had a farther meaning, that is coupled to our relationship with God and His Messiah, which is to set us free not just from sin but also from all of our sicknesses and our diseases!

Parashat Tazria opens continuing the discussion on ritual impurity and purity. The Torah speaks of women who give birth, whether a male or female child, undergo a process of purification following having given birth. We also read about Tzaraat (תַּרְעָתָהּ), which is often mistranslated as *“leprosy.”* Tzaraat is a supernatural plague which also may afflict garments and even the home. The Torah provides various signs for the kohen (priest) to be able to judge whether the afflicted person, material, or home is to be pronounced tamei (impure) or tahor (pure). The Torah says, *13:3 ‘The priest shall look at the mark on the skin of the body, and if the hair in the infection has turned white and the infection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is an infection of tzaraat; when the priest has looked at him, he shall pronounce him unclean. (NASB)* These instructions help the kohen to determine whether this is simply a surface affliction as opposed to something that goes much deeper. This form of affliction may only be healed with the help of the Lord God of Israel. The way the supernatural affliction of Tzaraat is described to us, these scriptures direct us to consider the deeper spiritual insights in the affliction of the body to the sinfulness of the soul. When considering the connection between the body and the soul, the rabbis in the *Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A and 5B* speak of the love of God in relation to affliction and this week’s Torah portion

on Tzaraat. Based upon the items that may be afflicted with Tzaraat (Person, Place, or Thing) in the different afflictions of the skin, the common denominator is that there are different shades of white for distinguishing one's affliction. According to the *Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5*, the only skin afflictions that may be viewed as God's reminder to improve our lifestyle are the four kinds that are mentioned here in Parashat Tazria. *Sforno on Vayikra / Leviticus 13:2 Part 2* states, "While they are not classified as afflictions revealing G'd's love for the person thus afflicted, they are however, described as *מזבחה כפרה*, as "an altar of atonement" serving as a stepping stone to atonement for the character weakness that the afflicted person has to overcome. G'd does not employ any other medically well known skin diseases as His instrument to call us to order for the various sins committed." The reason these things are considered supernatural afflictions is because these skin diseases listed in the Torah are not in the medical text books. The conclusion is that these afflictions are the result of sin, and therefore one is being brought to the realization of one's need to repent, turn from sin, and seek the Lord God of Israel. This may be why the *Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5B* states saying, *ונגעים לא והתניא כל מי שיש בו אחד מארבעה*, *The Gemara asks: Is leprosy not an affliction of love? Didn't we learn in a baraita: If one has any of the four signs of leprosy (Vayikra / Leviticus 13) they are nothing other than an altar of atonement?* The rabbis suggest that Tzaraat may be an affliction of love. If the point of Tzaraat is repentance, then the Gemara asks a very good question that leads us to understand the infinite love of God for His people. Teshuvah (repentance) literally means, "return." At its core, it is a process designed to help us get back and to bring all of who we are to the Lord, first internally, then externally through our actions and our words. In the Torah, leprosy was used as a graphic sign that something was very wrong spiritually and teshuvah was in order. There are many reasons given as the underlying problem, i.e, lashon harah. Some reasons may be jealousy, anger and arrogance (domination). Rebellion, a complex action, is another powerful motivation for lashon harah that often results in great harm and destruction to both ourselves and to others. This is why when one was afflicted by Tzaraat, they were declared unclean and forced to leave the community of believers as a protection for them. This is meant for us to place our

lives before God because when we do, the Lord will change us from the inside out. The Lord God begins the process of perfecting us from the moment we place our faith in Him and in His Messiah Yeshua. The Lord sends His Spirit into our lives. He creates in us new hearts with new holy desires (*Ezekiel 36:26*). He transforms our stubborn will, and He opens our hearts to embrace the truth rather than to reject it, to believe rather than to doubt. He gives us a hunger for righteousness and a desire for Him. This is the transformation of the inner most person. It is from this perspective Tzaraat was meant as the end all of spiritual warnings. Based upon these Scriptures, everything that occurs in our lives, whether good or bad, the Lord uses to make us like His Messiah (*Romans 8:28–30*). Let's discuss these things further in this week's Torah portion.

This week we are looking at *Vayikra / Leviticus 13:1-17*.

Vayikra / Leviticus 13:1-17

13:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, 13:2 'When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or a scab or a bright spot, and it becomes an infection of leprosy on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. 13:3 'The priest shall look at the mark on the skin of the body, and if the hair in the infection has turned white and the infection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is an infection of leprosy; when the priest has looked at him, he shall pronounce him unclean. 13:4 'But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his body, and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and the hair on it has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate him who has the infection for seven days. 13:5 'The priest shall look at him on the seventh day, and if in his eyes the infection has not changed and the infection has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him for seven more days. 13:6 'The priest shall look at him again on the seventh day, and if the infection has faded and the mark has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a scab. And he shall wash his clothes and be clean. 13:7 'But if the scab spreads farther on the skin after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again to

the priest. 13:8 'The priest shall look, and if the scab has spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is leprosy. 13:9 'When the infection of leprosy is on a man, then he shall be brought to the priest. 13:10 'The priest shall then look, and if there is a white swelling in the skin, and it has turned the hair white, and there is quick raw flesh in the swelling, 13:11 it is a chronic leprosy on the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall not isolate him, for he is unclean. 13:12 'If the leprosy breaks out farther on the skin, and the leprosy covers all the skin of him who has the infection from his head even to his feet, as far as the priest can see, 13:13 then the priest shall look, and behold, if the leprosy has covered all his body, he shall pronounce clean him who has the infection; it has all turned white and he is clean. 13:14 'But whenever raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean. 13:15 'The priest shall look at the raw flesh, and he shall pronounce him unclean; the raw flesh is unclean, it is leprosy. 13:16 'Or if the raw flesh turns again and is changed to white, then he shall come to the priest, 13:17 and the priest shall look at him, and behold, if the infection has turned to white, then the priest shall pronounce clean him who has the infection; he is clean. (NASB)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: ב אָדָם כִּי-יְהִיָּה בְעוֹר-בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אוֹ-סַפְּחַת אוֹ בְּהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר-בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֹגַע צָרְעַת וְהוּכָא אֶל-אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אוֹ אֶל-אֶחָד מִבְּנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים: ג וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַנֹּגַע בְּעוֹר-הַבָּשָׂר וְשַׁעַר בִּנְגַע הָפֶה | לָבָן וּמְרָאָה הַנֹּגַע עֲמֹק מֵעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ נֹגַע צָרְעַת הוּא וְרָאָהּ הַכֹּהֵן וְטָמֵא אֹתוֹ: ד וְאִם-בְּהֶרֶת לְבָנָה הוּא בְעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ וְעֵמֶק אֵין-מְרָאָה מִן-הָעוֹר וְשַׁעֲרָה לֹא-הָפֶה לָבָן וְהִסְגִּיר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַנֹּגַע שְׁבַעַת יָמִים: ה וְרָאָהּ הַכֹּהֵן בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְהָיָה הַנֹּגַע עֲמֵד בְּעֵינָיו לֹא-פָשָׂה הַנֹּגַע בְּעוֹר וְהִסְגִּירוֹ הַכֹּהֵן שְׁבַעַת יָמִים שְׁנִית: [שְׁנִי] ו וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֹתוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שְׁנִית וְהָיָה כִּהְיָה הַנֹּגַע וְלֹא-פָשָׂה הַנֹּגַע בְּעוֹר וְטָהְרוֹ הַכֹּהֵן מִסַּפְּחַת הוּא וְכִכְס בְּגָדָיו וְטָהַר: ז וְאִם-פָּשָׂה תִפְשָׂה הַמִּסַּפְּחַת בְּעוֹר אַחֲרֵי הִרְאָתוֹ אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן לְטָהֲרָתוֹ וְנִרְאָה שְׁנִית אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן: ח וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָיָה פְּשֻׁתָּה הַמִּסַּפְּחַת בְּעוֹר וְטָמֵא הַכֹּהֵן צָרְעַת הוּא: ט נֹגַע צָרְעַת כִּי תִהְיֶה

בְּאָדָם וְהוּבָא אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן: י וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה שְׂאֵת-לְבָנָה בְּעוֹר וְהָיָה הַפֶּכֶה שֹׁעָר לָבָן וּמַחִית בְּשָׂר חַי בְּשֵׂאֵת: יא צָרַעַת נוֹשֶׁנֶת הוּא בְּעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ וְטִמְאוֹ הַכֹּהֵן לֹא יִסְגְּרוּ כִּי טִמְאָה הוּא: יב וְאִם-פְּרוּחַ תִּפְרָח הַצָּרַעַת בְּעוֹר וְכִסְתָּהּ הַצָּרַעַת אֵת כָּל-עוֹר הַנֹּגַע מֵרֹאשׁוֹ וְעַד-רַגְלָיו לְכָל-מִרְאֵה עֵינָי הַכֹּהֵן: יג וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה כִסְתָּהּ הַצָּרַעַת אֵת-כָּל-בְּשָׂרוֹ וְטִהַר אֶת-הַנֹּגַע כִּלּוֹ הֶפֶד לָבָן טָהוֹר הוּא: יד וּבְיוֹם הַרְאוֹת בּוֹ בְּשָׂר חַי יִטְמָא: טו וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַבְּשָׂר הַחַי וְטִמְאוֹ הַבְּשָׂר הַחַי טִמְאָה הוּא צָרַעַת הוּא: טז אוֹ כִּי יָשׁוּב הַבְּשָׂר הַחַי וְנִהְפָּד לְלָבָן וּבָא אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן: יז וְרָאָהּ הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה נִהְפָּד הַנֹּגַע לְלָבָן וְטִהַר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַנֹּגַע טָהוֹר הוּא:

The Torah instructions to the priest who is responsible to inspect the one afflicted with tzaraat are given in the following way, the Lord says, *13:3 'The priest shall look at the mark on the skin of the body, and if the hair in the infection has turned white and the infection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is an infection of tzaraat; when the priest has looked at him, he shall pronounce him unclean. (NASB)* These instructions help the kohen to determine whether this is simply a surface affliction as opposed to something that goes much deeper. This form of affliction may only be healed with the help of the Lord God of Israel. The way the supernatural affliction of Tzaraat is described to us, these scriptures direct us to consider the deeper spiritual insights in the affliction of the body to the sinfulness of the soul. This idea of self inspection is a part of who we are as the children of God. The *Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A* speaks of these things in the following way.

Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A

א"ר יצחק כל הקורא ק"ש על מטתו כאלו אוהז חרב של שתי פיות בידו שנאמר (תהלים קמט, ו) רוממות אל בגרו- נם וחרב פיפיות בידם מאי משמע אמר מר זוטרא ואיתי- מא רב אשי מרישא דענינא דכתיב (תהלים קמט, ה) יעלזו חסידים בכבוד ירננו על משכבותם וכתיב בתריה רוממות *The Gemara continues its treatment of the recitation of Shema upon one's bed. Rabbi Yitzhak said: Anyone who recites Shema on his*

bed, it is as if he holds a double-edged sword, guarding him from all evil, as it is stated: “High praises of God in their mouths, and a double-edged sword in their hands” (Psalms 149:6). The Gemara asks: From where is it inferred that this verse from Psalms refers to the recitation of Shema? Mar Zutra, and some say Rav Ashi, said: We derive it from the preceding verse, as it is written: “Let the pious exult in glory; let them joyously sing upon their beds.” The praise of God from one’s bed is the recitation of Shema. And it is written thereafter: “High praises of God in their mouths, and a double-edged sword in their hands.”

The rabbis of the Talmud speak of the Shema (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4*) and the significance of reciting the Shema saying that the one who recites the Shema is as if he holds a double edged sword that guards him from all evil. Why do the rabbis consider the recitation of the Shema in this way? Why do you think the rabbis place such emphasis upon the recitation of the Shema? The context for the Shema is found in the following verses: *6:4 ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 6:5 ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6:6 ‘These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 6:7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 6:8 ‘You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 6:9 ‘You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (NASB, שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, ד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה | אֶחָד: ה וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכֹל-לְבָבְךָ וּבְכֹל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכֹל-מְאֹדְךָ: ו וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם עַל-לְבָבְךָ: ז וְשָׂאָנְתָם לְבָנֶיךָ וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִקְוֹתְךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ: ח וְקָשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: ט וְכָתַבְתָּם עַל-מְזוּזֹת בֵּיתְךָ (וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ:* Notice the context of the Shema, believing in the oneness of God and how we are to hold onto the Lord, to love the Lord with all our heart and soul. The Word of God is to become a part of our lives that is said to be *“upon our hearts,”* we are to diligently teach God’s word

to our children, speaking of God's word always when raising up and when laying down, and God's Word is to become a part of our homes, to the very foundation of who we are, as the Scriptures say, God's word is written upon the doors of our homes and are to be placed upon our foreheads and as a sign on our hands. This describes the position of the Word of God in our lives as going before us directing our minds (forehead) and being at our right hand, a place of power and authority in our lives for discerning between what is right as opposed to what is wrong. When the Talmud speaks of the Shema being a double-edged sword capable of protecting one from evil; this is the context of the rabbi's statements. These instructions on the Shema speak of something that is more than a superficial recitation of the Shema. The rabbis are speaking of having a deep love for the Lord God and for His Word. The instructions in Parashat Tazria parallel the instructions on the inspection of tzaraat as something more than simply a surface affliction as opposed to something that goes much deeper. Tzaraat is a disease that speaks to a deeper spiritual issue that only the Lord is able to heal and set the one afflicted on the correct path where we are told to seek the Lord with all of our mind, soul, and heart. These scriptures direct us to consider the deep spiritual insights in the affliction of the body to the sinfulness of the soul. We are called as the children of God to carefully inspect ourselves so that we do not end up in this situation.

This is the context of the Psalmist when he said the following, ג
אֶפְפוּנִי | חֲבָלֵי-מָוֶת וּמְצָרֵי שְׂאוּל מְצָאוּנִי צָרָה וַיְגוֹן אֶמְצָא: ד וּבְשֵׁם-יְהוָה
116:3 אֶקְרָא אֲנִי יְהוָה מִלְּטָה נַפְשִׁי: ה חַנּוּן יְהוָה וְצַדִּיק וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ מְרַחֵם:
The cords of death encompassed me And the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow. 116:4 Then I called upon the name of the Lord: 'O Lord, I beseech You, save my life!' 116:5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate. (NASB) The Lord preserves the simple (116:6), when we seek the Lord we return to His rest (שְׁלוֹם, peace, 116:7), and the Lord rescues us from death (116:8). Notice what it means to call upon the name of the Lord. This follows what Paul wrote to the Romans saying, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:13) According to Bereshit / Genesis 4:26, the Torah tells us the practice of calling on the Lord began long ago, by the third generation of mankind in the time when Adam's grandson Enosh was born: The Scripture states, 4:26 To

Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord. (NASB, כו וְלִשְׁתַּגְּבִים-הוּא, אָז הוֹתֵל לְקָרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: (יִלְד-בֵּן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ אֶנּוֹשׁ אָז הוֹתֵל לְקָרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: The name אֶנּוֹשׁ means “a man” or “a mortal” indicating the mortality of man being frail and without God. Based upon the Masoretic Text, the name of Enosh (אֶנּוֹשׁ) suggests that men began to realize both the emptiness and vanity of life apart from God as well as their own fragility and mortality. The practice of calling upon the Lord as it is revealed in the Torah is not meant to be performed as a ritual by rote. It is our calling upon the One we love, the Lord our Father in heaven and His Messiah Yeshua. Just as children calling to their parents, the Lord is always available to hear our call. This is why the Rabbis in the *Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A* make the claims that they do in regards to the recitation of the Shema.

Calling upon the Lord is like drawing refreshing water from a deep well that never runs dry. When Peter was speaking to the people on the Temple mount, he quoted the prophet Joel as saying, “*And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (*Acts 2:21*). Peter was telling men that this prophecy was being fulfilled that very hour, and that the time had come when men could “*call on the name of the Lord*” and be saved. Peter went on to speak of Yeshua the Messiah and his sacrifice for the people. Peter closed by saying “*that God hath made that same man (Yeshua), whom they had crucified both Lord and Messiah of Israel*” (*Acts 2:36*). Therefore, we call upon the name of Yeshua to be saved because he is our Lord, and authority and power were given to him by our Father in heaven. This is why Paul said what he did to the Romans, “*Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (*Romans 10:13*). When the people heard the message of what the Messiah had done on the day of Shavuot, they were pricked in their hearts and they wanted to know what to do to be saved (*Acts 2:38*). Peter answered their question saying that they are to call upon the name of the Lord. Peter began speaking to the people saying, “*You men of Israel hear these words*” (*Acts 2:22*). So the idea is that one must hear the Word of God spoken. This again draws us back to the rabbinic comments upon the Shema and the protection of God’s word as a double-edged sword. This is consistent with what we read the rabbis saying in the *Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A*

as the rabbis continue to discuss the topic of the Shema.

Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A

ואמר רבי יצחק כל הקורא קריאת שמע על מטתו מזיקין בדילין הימנו שנאמר (איוב ה, ז) ובני רשף יגביהו עוף ואין עוף אלא תורה שנאמר (משלי כג, ה) התעיף עיניך בו ואי־ננו ואין רשף אלא מזיקין שנאמר (דברים לב, כד) מזי רעב ולחומי רשף וקטב מרירי. *And Rabbi Yitzhak said: Anyone who recites Shema upon his bed, demons stay away from him. This is alluded to, as it is stated: "But man is born into trouble, and the sparks [reshef] fly [uf] upward" (Job 5:7). The verse is explained: The word fly [uf] means nothing other than Torah, as Torah is difficult to grasp and easy to lose, like something that floats away, as it is stated: "Will you set your eyes upon it? It is gone; for riches certainly make themselves wings, like an eagle that flies into the heavens" (Proverbs 23:5). The word "sparks" means nothing other than demons, as it is stated: "Wasting of hunger, and the devouring of the sparks [reshef] and bitter destruction [ketev meriri], and the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, with the venom of crawling things of the dust" (Deuteronomy 32:24). Here we see reshef listed along with ketev meriri, both of which are understood by the Sages to be names of demons.*

According to the rabbis, the recitation of the Shema upon one's bed keeps demons away because a man is born into troubles and it is the Word of the Lord that sets us free from our troubles and from the evil one. This is consistent with the conclusions that the Study of God's Word keeps suffering away from the man that does so. The reason being, the one who studies God's Word and seeks to apply God's Word to his life seeks to live in righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth. The one who determines himself to study God's word distances himself from trouble and suffering by staying away from the works of sin in his life. So we see that one must hear the Word of the Lord, and after hearing the word, placing it upon our hearts, we are *"pricked in the hearts"*

(*Acts 2:37*) to turn from our sins in Teshuvah and to seek to apply God's Word to our lives. The Word of the Lord produces faith in our hearts. The *Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A* continues saying the following.

אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש כל העוסק בתורה יסורין בדילין
הימנו שנאמר ובני רשף יגביהו עוף ואין עוף אלא תורה
שנאמר התעיף עיניך בו ואיננו ואין רשף אלא יסורין שנא-
מר *Regarding this unclear verse, Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: If one engages in Torah study, suffering stays away from him, as it is stated: "And the sparks fly upward." And fly means nothing other than Torah, and sparks means nothing other than suffering, as it is stated: "Wasting of hunger, and the devouring of the sparks," equating devouring sparks with wasting hunger, as both are types of suffering. From here, we derive that through Torah, fly, one is able to distance himself, upward, from suffering, sparks.*

This is why the rabbis say that for those who study God's Word they will see God (*Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A*). Note what happened when Peter spoke the Word of God to the people, these people heard the message, believed, and then were told what to do to be saved. Peter said, "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (*Acts 2:38*). What did these people do when they "*called upon the name of the Lord?*" First they heard the Word of God, believed the Word of God, repented of their sins, confessed Yeshua as the Messiah, as the Son of God, and as Lord of their lives, and were baptized into the Messiah for the forgiveness of sins (*Acts 2:38*). The reason these Scriptures are written in this way is because without repentance (Teshuvah) there is no forgiveness of sins. The ritual bath (mikvah / baptism) is the physical act of repenting and turning one's life towards God's ways. Notice something here, one is rendering obedience to the "*Lord of Lords*" by doing these things. Yeshua said, "*16:16 'He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.'*" (*Mark 16:16*). This lays down the simple principle, obey the Lord and be saved. The point of studying the Torah is to not get to the point where extreme measures

are needed to draw us back to repentance. The Talmud considers the disease of Tzaraat as purposed to lead one to repentance. If the point of Tzaraat is repentance, then the Gemara asks a good question. According to the Torah, leprosy was used as a graphic sign that something was very wrong spiritually and Teshuvah was in order. Rebellion may manifest itself in complex ways in our lives that result in great destruction to our selves and to others. This is why when one was afflicted by Tzaraat, they were declared unclean and forced to leave the community of believers as a protection for them and for the community. Upon the manifestation of Tzaraat, sin has been firmly rooted in the person, place, or thing. This is meant for us to place our lives before God daily because when we do, the Lord will change us from the inside out. The Lord God begins the process of perfecting us from the moment we place our faith in Him and in His Messiah Yeshua, and this is the point we should be at all times of our lives. The Lord sends His Spirit into our lives to guide and direct us while He is creating in us new hearts with new holy desires (*Ezekiel 36:26*). He transforms our stubborn wills. He opens our hearts to embrace the truth rather than to reject it, to believe rather than to doubt. He gives us a hunger for righteousness and a desire for Him. This is the transformation of the inner most person. It is from this perspective Tzaraat was meant as the end all of spiritual warnings. Based upon these Scriptures, everything that occurs in our lives, whether good or bad, the Lord uses to make us like His Messiah (*Romans 8:28–30*). As we remain in the Messiah Yeshua, we are warned to stay away from sin and from the ways of the nations. The Lord established these examples in the Scriptures to learn from. The warning to stay away from the nations was not simply to avoid astrology, occult, mediums and sorcery. Parashat Tazria warns us using the spiritual malady of Tzaraat saying that the inspection of our lives should be something more than simply superficial as opposed to something that goes much deeper. As the children of God we are called to inspect our lives daily; not just the superficial but to look deep within ourselves and seek out the motivations of our hearts for the reasons why we do the things that we do. All things should be done for the glory of God!