

פרשת  
מצרע  
*Parashat Metzora*

*Vayikra / Leviticus 14:1-15:33, 2 Kings 7:3-20  
Mark 1:35-45*

### Is ritual impurity a sin?

In this week's Torah portion we read the following, *Vayikra / Leviticus 15:1-3*, וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: *15:1 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: דַּבְּרוּ אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֲלֵהֶם: 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. וְנָזַת תְּהִיגָה טְמֵאתוֹ בְּזוּבוֹ כִּי יִשָּׁרֵר בְּשָׂרוֹ אֶת-: 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. (NASB) Parashat Metzora describes a situation when one has a discharge, a seeping flow of some sort from the body. The rabbis point out twice is the "discharge" (זָב) mentioned in verse 2 and in verse 3 "his discharge" (זוּבוֹ) is mentioned three times. The Halachic explanation on the differences between the verses is the two appearances of the flow serve to make him unclean, and the third obligates him also to bring an offering (*Talmud Bavli Niddah 43b and Megillah 8a*). Also, a flow of blood from a cut does not make one unclean, it is only during the abnormal flow, something that is occurring due to sickness or disease (i.e. a whitish-red-yellow flow coming out of*

the skin or sore) *Rashi on Vayikra / Leviticus 15:3 Part 1* states the following, “*רַר [WHETHER HIS FLESH] DRIP — This word is connected with ריר “spittle” — the meaning is that his flesh runs with its issue as spittle, i. e. that it (the flow) comes forth clear in appearance (not thick and troubled).*” Here Rashi points out how the word *רַר* is similar to the expression that we read in *1 Samuel 21:14* *וירד רירו על זקנו* “*his spittle ran down his beard*” when David pretended to be mentally disturbed before the Philistines in order to save his life. The body of the afflicted person drips with this discharge and it is as the one who spits, a disrespectful or shameful act. This reminds us of the levirate law when the relative does not want to give children for his brother (take his brother’s wife) she takes off her shoe and spits upon the ground as a show of contempt. (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 25:5-9*)

The text (*Vayikra / Leviticus 15*) goes on to describe what occurs following one having this uncleanness of a discharge from the body. Whatever he touches becomes unclean (*15:7*), everything on which he sits becomes unclean (*15:4*), anyone who touches his bed becomes unclean (*15:5*), whoever sits on the thing that he sat upon becomes unclean (*15:6*), if the unclean person spits upon someone else, he becomes unclean (*15:8*), the text repeats what he sits upon and everything he touches as being unclean and those who touch those things also become unclean (*15:9-11*). The text goes on to say clay vessels that were touched are to be broken (*15:12*), and when a person is cleansed from the discharge, he is to wait seven days for his cleansing to be complete, and he is to wash his cloths and body in running water (*וישׂוּף בַּמַּיִם*). The text describes the transmittance of uncleanness to objects and to others. In the *Talmud Bavli Niddah 54* the rabbis describe the menstruating woman as a more stringent case than what is referred to here in *Vayikra / Leviticus 15* on the one with a discharge. In the case of a woman the menstrual blood confers uncleanness when either wet or dry, whereas the one with a discharge confers uncleanness only when wet. Also, a menstruating woman causes impurity as soon as she has spotted blood the first time, whereas the blood of a person afflicted with *זיבה* transmits impurity only after several sightings or sightings on consecutive days respectively. The rabbis say there is a kol vachomer (*קל וחומר*) to be learned here. The idea here is

that these things refer to the impurity and not the person who becomes impure. The transmittance of impurity is clearly described here in the text, where both the male zav (זַו) and the female transmits impurity, the man who sees his discharge, makes the observation over a period of a few days (three) whereas the woman knows the period has begun on the first sign of spots. After the man has observed on the third day that he has a discharge, then uncleanness has been transmitting from since the first day the discharge was observed.

In the NT, there are occasions when Yeshua used a rabbinic exegetical technique known as the *“kol vachomer.”* The Kol Vachomer is a rule of logical argumentation by means of which two cases are compared, one lenient and the other more stringent. Examples of this may be found in *Matthew 5:21-22* and *5:27-28*. In *Matthew 5:21-22*, Yeshua says that any man who is angry with his brother is a murderer and in danger of being cast into hell. On the one hand, murder is very *“heavy”* and the penalty is death, whereas if someone thinks in their heart of murder or killing someone but does not act upon it is not judged. No man knows the thoughts of another man, so thoughts of murder are lenient until acted upon which would become heavy. Yeshua raised the bar saying that if a man thinks in his heart murderous thoughts he is guilty and in danger of hell. In fact, if a man hates his brother he is in danger due to the sin of murder and in danger of hell. In a similar way, in *Matthew 5:27-28*, Yeshua said that any man who looks upon a woman and lusts for her has already committed adultery and is guilty. Similarly, the act of adultery is *“heavy”* and the penalty is death, whereas our thoughts are considered light, even today we are very lenient on the way we think, the thoughts of our minds as compared to our actions. This is closely related to our relationship with others and with God, especially with regard to our hearts, the very thing that we judge leniently upon (the thoughts of our hearts) is the very dwelling place of God’s Holy Spirit. Taking the perspective that Yeshua sends the Holy Spirit to dwell within our hearts, within our bodies, how *“heavy”* does what Yeshua is saying become if we have murder or lust in our hearts regardless of whether we act upon them physically? It is within this context that these commandments on the transmittance of uncleanness are discussed in regard to the holiness of God’s Tabernacle. There is a holiness and sanctity to the place in

which we go to draw near to the Lord God Almighty. Going before the Lord in prayer is a very high calling, the sanctity, the holiness, the very nature of this act of standing before God in prayer, these Scriptures describe to what extent (level) we are to sanctify our lives as we live, breath, and walk before God. What we are reading here in the Torah is related to being unclean and going before God. This may also be paralleled to going before God in uncleanness of heart, unrepentant. David said that if he regards iniquity in his heart the Lord will not hear his prayers. (*Tehillim / Psalms 66:18*) Just as we see here in the descriptions from Parashat Metzora on transmittance of ritual impurity, one can live in a state of uncleanness and it would not effect one's life until going before God at his Tabernacle. Going before God in a state of impurity carries with it the penalty of karet (cutting off, death). Note also that the person who has tzaraat or a dripping discharge have serious problems that are both physical and spiritual in nature. The kal vachomer here the rabbis are talking about, the heavy and light, is in regards to our uncleanness and before God. These things teach us that we must repent before going before the Lord in prayer because unrepentance may be a serious hinderance to our prayers. In addition to this, as we discussed in [Parashat Tazria](#), is how these things lead us to understand the origins of uncleanness before God and how intrinsic uncleanness can only be removed by a miracle of God through faith in His Messiah Yeshua. (*This is what the author of the book of Hebrews is trying to explain to us. He isn't providing a teaching on doing away with the Torah command, he is explaining the weightier spiritual significance of the death, burial, and resurrection of Yeshua in relation to cleansing us from the intrinsic impurity that is in all of us!*)

This week we are looking at the Torah text from *Vayikra / Leviticus 15:1-15*.

### *Vayikra / Leviticus 15:1-15*

*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 wheth-*

*er 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; 15:6 and whoever sits on the thing on which the man with the discharge has been sitting, shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. 15:7 'Also whoever touches the person with the discharge shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. 15:8 'Or if the man with the discharge spits on one who is clean, he too shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. 15:9 'Every saddle on which the person with the discharge rides becomes unclean. 15:10 'Whoever then touches any of the things which were under him shall be unclean until evening, and he who carries them shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. 15:11 'Likewise, whomever the one with the discharge touches without having rinsed his hands in water shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. 15:12 'However, an earthenware vessel which the person with the discharge touches shall be broken, and every wooden vessel shall be rinsed in water. 15:13 'Now when the man with the discharge becomes cleansed from his discharge, then he shall count off for himself seven days for his cleansing; he shall then wash his clothes and bathe his body in running water and will become clean. 15:14 'Then on the eighth day he shall take for himself two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and come before the Lord to the doorway of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest; 15:15 and the priest shall offer them, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf before the Lord because of his discharge. (NASB)*

א וַיִּדְבַר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: ב זָכְרוּ  
אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרַתֶּם אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי יִהְיֶה זָב  
מִבְּשָׂרוֹ זָבֹו טָמֵא הוּא: ג וְזֹאת תִּהְיֶה טְמֵאתוֹ בְּזָבֹו רָר  
בְּשָׂרוֹ אֶת-זָבֹו אוֹ-הַחֲתִים בְּשָׂרוֹ מִזָּבֹו טְמֵאתוֹ הוּא: ד  
כָּל-הַמְּשַׁכֵּב אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב עִלָּיו הַזָּב יִטְמָא וְכָל-הַכְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-  
יִישֵׁב עִלָּיו יִטְמָא: ה וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִגַּע בְּמִשְׁכָּבוֹ יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו  
וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרְב: ו וְהַיֹּשֵׁב עַל-הַכְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-  
יִישֵׁב עִלָּיו הַזָּב יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרְב:  
ז וְהַנֹּגֵעַ בְּבֶשֶׂר הַזָּב יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא  
עַד-הָעֶרְב: ח וְכִי-יֵרֶק הַזָּב בַּטְּהוֹר וְכִבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ  
בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרְב: ט וְכָל-הַמְּרַכֵּב אֲשֶׁר יִרְכַּב עִלָּיו  
הַזָּב יִטְמָא: י וְכָל-הַנֹּגֵעַ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה תַּחְתָּיו יִטְמָא  
עַד-הָעֶרְב וְהַנּוֹשֵׂא אוֹתָם יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא  
עַד-הָעֶרְב: יא וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִגַּע-בּוֹ הַזָּב וַיִּדְּיו לֹא-שָׁטַף  
בַּמַּיִם וְכִבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרְב: יב וְכָל־  
חַרְשׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִגַּע-בּוֹ הַזָּב יִשְׁבֹּר וְכָל-כְּלִי-עֵץ יִשְׁטַף בַּמַּיִם:  
יג וְכִי-יִטְהַר הַזָּב מִזָּבֹו וְסָפַר לוֹ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לְטְהַרְתּוֹ  
וְכִבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם חַיִּים וְטָהַר: יד וּבַיּוֹם  
הַשְּׁמִינִי יִקַּח-לוֹ שְׁתֵּי תָרִים אוֹ שְׁנֵי בָּנֵי יוֹנָה וּבָא | לְפָנָי  
יְהוָה אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּנְתְּנֵם אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן: טו וַעֲשֵׂה  
אֹתָם הַכֹּהֵן אֶחָד חֲטָאת וְהָאֶחָד עֹלָה וְכִפֹּר עֲלָיו הַכֹּהֵן לְפָנָי  
יְהוָה מִזָּבֹו: ס

One of the major questions that comes up is on this issue of uncleanness and whether contracting uncleanness is a sin? Remember the Torah describes the physical ritual uncleanness of the body and deals with the procedures for becoming clean so that one may stand before God at the entrance of His Tabernacle. Do the rabbis consider contracting uncleanness a sin? What does the Bible say concerning these things? Well, we read in *Vayikra / Leviticus 12:6* how after giving birth to a child a woman was required to bring a burnt offering and a sin offering to the Lord. The sin offering here seems troubling. The question we have is did the woman sin having a baby? This problem

is due to the fact that the woman is fulfilling the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. Why did she need to bring a sin offering? The rabbis in the Talmud describe the situation when a woman is in the pain of childbirth, she might inadvertently curse her husband or take a vow never to let him touch her again, and because of that, she must bring a sin offering to exonerate herself from her rash vow or her resentful thoughts. Some women who have had a difficult childbirth for their children may concur. The more consistent explanation is that sin offerings were brought for purification purposes. In these situations, the sin offering was not a punishment for sin or a consequence of iniquity, it was simply part of the purification ritual. Along similar lines, What we see going on here in Parashat Metzora, a person who suffered an unnatural bodily discharge and a person being purified of leprosy also brought sin offerings. Based upon what we have been studying in the book of Vayikra / Leviticus, the sin of uncleanness is connected to the Tabernacle, when one knowingly goes to the Tabernacle and participates in the sacrifices (i.e. Shalamim Korban) carries with it the penalty of karet (cutting off, death). The rabbinic discussions draw out the deeper spiritual reasons behind ritual uncleanness, such as in the case of Tzaraat (i.e. the evil eye, lashon hara, etc). This flowing discharge (Zav) of the flesh may also be paralleled to the a deeper spiritual problem. The conferring of uncleanness through the touching of objects reveals to us the problem with the source / origins of sin that leads to uncleanness. This is why Yeshua drew out the type of uncleanness that are related to sin in [Mark 7](#) speaking of those things which come from within, from the heart, sexual and murderous things. In [2 Corinthians 6](#) Paul wrote the following:

***2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1***

*6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 6:15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be*

*their God, and they shall be My people. 6:17 'Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. 6:18 'And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' Says the Lord Almighty. 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (NASB)*

<sup>14</sup>Μὴ γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις: τίς γὰρ μετοχή δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀνομία; ἢ τίς κοινωνία φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος; <sup>15</sup>τίς δὲ συμφώνησις Χριστοῦ πρὸς Βελιάρ, ἢ τίς μερὶς πιστῶ μετὰ ἀπίστου; <sup>16</sup>τίς δὲ συγκατάθεσις ναῶ θεοῦ μετὰ εἰδώλων; ἡμεῖς γὰρ ναὸς θεοῦ ἐσμὲν ζῶντος: καθὼς εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς ὅτι Ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω, καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῶν θεός, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι λαός. <sup>17</sup>διὸ ἐξέλθατε ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν καὶ ἀφορίσθητε, λέγει κύριος, καὶ ἀκαθάρτου μὴ ἄπτεσθε: κἀγὼ εἰσδέξομαι ὑμᾶς, <sup>18</sup>καὶ ἔσομαι ὑμῖν εἰς πατέρα, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔσεσθέ μοι εἰς υἱοὺς καὶ θυγατέρας, λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ. <sup>1</sup>ταύτας οὖν ἔχοντες τὰς ἐπαγγελίας, ἀγαπητοί, καθαρίσωμεν ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος, ἐπιτελοῦντες ἁγιωσύνην ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ.

יְדֹאֲלֶתְצַמְדוּ לְמַהְרָסֵי אַמוּנָה לְמִשְׁחָה עִמָּם בְּעַל אֶחָד כִּי  
מֵה אַתְּוָה בֵּין צֶדֶק לְרָשָׁע וּמֵה בְרִית בֵּין אֹר לְחַשְׁדָּה: טו  
בְּמָה יִשְׁוֶה הַמְּשִׁיחַ לְבָלְיַעַל אוּ מָה חֵלֶק לְשִׁמְר אַמוּנָה  
עִם־מַהְרָס אַמוּנָה: טז מֵה־קֶשֶׁר לְהִיכַל אֱלֹהִים עִם־אֱלִילִים  
כִּי־אֲנַחְנוּ הִיכַל אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים כְּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר הָאֱלֹהִים וְשָׁכַנְתִּי  
בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהִיִּיתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וְהֵם יִהְיוּ־  
לִי לְעָם: יז עַל־כֵּן צְאוּ מִתּוֹכְכֶם וְהִבְרֹוּ נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְטָמֵא אֶל־  
תִּגְעוּ וְאֲנִי אֶקְבֹּל אֶתְכֶם: יח וְהִיִּיתִי לָכֶם לְאָב וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־  
לִי לְבָנִים וּלְבָנוֹת נְאֻם־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: ... פֶּרֶק ז ... א לָכֵן  
יְדִידִים בְּהִיּוֹת לָנוּ הַבְּטָחוֹת אֵלֶּה נְטִהֵר נַפְשָׁנוּ מִכָּל־טְמֵאָת



## בְּשָׂר וָרוּחַ וְנִעְלָה בְּקֹדֶשׁ בְּיָרֵאת אֱלֹהִים:

Paul's reference to Belial is to the Tanach in the book of *Judges 19-21*. The concepts that Paul is bringing together here parallels Sodom and Gomorrah and sexual sin, murderous behavior, war, and the lack of the qualities that make us who we are as God's people being filled with peace, humble, having hospitality, and sexual morality. Paul connects this to our bodies being the Temple of God and then being united with those who are unclean in their sins (unbelievers, sons of Belial). It is interesting what Paul is saying to the Corinthians, he is describing that we are not to be bound together with unbelievers. We who are righteous (the light) have no part with lawlessness (the dark), and that believers have nothing in common with unbelievers. Paul tells the Corinthians to come out from amongst the unbelievers, the lawless, the wicked, and the unrighteous. He is telling them to be holy and separate from the wicked. He then draws in the descriptions of contracting uncleanness from Parashat Metzora by stating "*do not touch what is unclean and I will welcome you.*" Is Paul saying that if we touch what is unclean God will not accept us? This seems to parallel Parashat Metzora on the transference of uncleanness and not being able to stand before God. The verse of interest is *2 Corinthians 6:17*, a word for word translation of the Greek text states καὶ ἀφορίσθητε, λέγει κύριος, καὶ ἀκαθάρτου μὴ ἅπτεσθε: καὶ γὰρ εἰσδέξομαι ὑμᾶς "*and be separated, says the Lord, and the unclean touch not, and I will take you in.*" The Hebrew translation says וְטִמְאָה אֶל־תִּגְעוּ וְאֲנִי אֶקְבֹּל אֶתְכֶם "*and the unclean thing do not touch and I will gather you.*" What is interesting is Paul uses the Greek word ἀκαθάρτου (ἀκάθαρτος, *not cleansed, unclean, in a ceremonial sense: that which must be abstained from according to the levitical law, in a moral sense: unclean in thought and life.*) and the Hebrew word to translate this is טִמְאָה (tamei) meaning "*ritually not pure, uncleanly, impure, uncleaned; forbidden for eating, untouchable; defiled.*" In *2 Corinthians 7:1* Paul tells us to "*cleanse*" (καθαρίζωμεν) ourselves in a ceremonial sense (καθαρίζω, *to make clean, cleanse, from physical stains and dirt, utensils, food, a leper, to cleanse by curing, to remove by cleansing, in a moral sense, to free from defilement of sin and from faults, to purify from wickedness, to free from guilt of sin, to purify, to consecrate by*

*cleansing or purifying, to consecrate, dedicate, to pronounce clean in a levitical sense*). Isn't it interesting the words Paul uses are closely connected to ritual purity which is the Hebrew word that is used in the Hebrew translation of the NT "*Tahor*" (טהור)? The Apostle Paul also tells us to Sanctify (קדשתנו, kidshanu) ourselves in the fear of God (ביראת אלהים). Was Paul telling us to make ourselves "*spiritually clean?*" Certainly not! He understood the differences between intrinsic and extrinsic uncleanness according to the Torah. He knew that spiritual cleansing was a work of God which is known in the Torah as the circumcision of the heart and as we have been studying in the book of Vayikra / Leviticus those sins which confer intrinsic impurity. Spiritual cleansing, the circumcision of the heart is a work of God and His Holy Spirit. Paul is saying that we are called to live holy, separate, and sanctified lives. How do we do that? Fortunately for us God's Word tells us exactly how to do that. Justification is our faith in Yeshua; Sanctification is how we live out our faith. Note how the Lord God Almighty has sanctified us in his Son Yeshua the Messiah. Because of this, we too are to sanctify our lives by living and walking in God's ways! The way we sanctify ourselves again is by separating ourselves like Paul said in *2 Corinthians 6:17* "*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you...*" Paul describes the standard by which God's people are to live by in his description on inheriting the kingdom of God according to *Ephesians 5:5* *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.* (KJV) Another example may be taken from the dietary commands. Those foods God says are unclean and we are not to eat, and those foods the Lord says are clean and we are to eat. We are given these commands so that we can practice הַבְּדָלָה "*separation from the world.*" This is the foundation stone of the Torah, and consequentially a fundamental part of our relationship with God and His Messiah in faith, faithfulness, righteousness, and holiness in our day to day lives. These commands that we read in this week's Torah portion (Parashat Metzora) are not a set of out dated commands that have no application for us today. These commands, just as all of God's Word, have much to teach us about our relationship with God, with His Messiah (Yesh-

ua), and how we are to live our lives each day. This is how the Torah and the Gospel Message work together to teach us the truth of God!