

פרשת תזריע ומצרע / Parshiot Tazria and Metzora

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32:1-32:52 MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of G-d

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How important is ritual purity today?

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Leviticus 12:1-15:33

הפטרה: 2 Kings 4:42-5:19, 7:3-20

הברית: Matthew 8:1-17, John 6:8-13

החדשה

10 This week is a double portion and the Triennial cycle reading is *Vayikra / Leviticus 13:40-14:32*. The reading this week deals with the regulations on Tsaraat (צרעת, leprosy) detailing (i) what to do for testing whether one has leprosy and (ii) what to do when one is healed. Ritual impurity was very important to the ancient Hebrew and the mitzvot on Tsaraat make that point very clear.

15 The disease of Tsaraat was regarded as a direct divine infliction and thus was regarded as an awful punishment from HaShem. The disease begins with specks on the eyelids and on the palms, gradually spreading over the body, bleaching the hair white wherever they appear, crusting the affected parts with white scales and causing terrible sores and swellings. The disease eats inward to the bones, rotting the whole body little-by-little. The sufferer of this disease was not allowed to live within the city and was required to have his or her outer garment rent as a sign of deep grief and to warn passersby to keep away from him by calling out "Unclean, unclean!" One could not speak to anyone including that of receiving or returning a salutation (in the Middle East this involved an embrace).

ויקרא 14:1-7

ש יד וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: זאת תהיה תורת המצרע פרש' 1
ביום טהרתו והובא אל-הכהן: ויצא הכהן אל-מחויץ 2
למחנה וראה הכהן והנה נרפא נגע-הצרעת מן-הצרוע: 3
וצנה הכהן ולקח למטהר שתי-צפרים חיות טהרות 4
ועץ ארו ושני תולעת ואוב: וצנה הכהן ושחט את- 5
הצפור האחת אל-כלי-חרש על-מים חיים: את-הצפר 6
החיה יקח אתה ואת-עץ הארו ואת-שני התולעת 7
ואת-האוב וטבל אותם ואת-הצפר החיה בדם הצפר 8
השחטה על המים החיים: והזה על המטהר מן- 9
הצרעת שבע פעמים וטהרו ושלח את-הצפר החיה 10
על-פני השדה: וכבם המטהר את-בגדיו ונלח את-

Vayikra / Leviticus 14:1-7

14:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 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, 14:4 then the priest shall give orders to take two live clean birds and cedar wood and a scarlet string and hyssop for the one who is to be cleansed. 14:5 'The priest shall also give orders to slay the one bird in an earthenware vessel over running water. 14:6 'As for the live bird, he shall take it together with the cedar wood and the scarlet string and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the live bird in the blood of the bird that was slain over the running water. 14:7 'He shall then sprinkle seven times the one who is to be cleansed from the leprosy and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the live bird go free over the open field. (NASB)

30 The person inflicted with Tsaraat (Leprosy) having to remain outside of
the city deals with the subject of ritual impurity in order to prevent the afflicted
from imparting the impurity to others. Now, ritual purification is aimed at
removing uncleanness however in the case of Tsaraat it was impossible to
become clean (ritually pure) outside of the direct divine intervention through
35 healing from the disease. Outside of Tsaraat, ritual purification was designed for
removing uncleanness prior to a particular type of activity and especially prior to
the worship of G-d. Ritual uncleanness is not the same as physical impurity
such as dirt stains, however all bodily fluids are considered ritually unclean. The
methods for contracting Tumah (state of ritual impurity) and becoming tamei
(impure, unclean) can be received in the following manners: (i) by contact with a
40 dead body and by contact with certain animals, including some insects and lizards
(see *Vayikra / Leviticus 11:28-32*). Note: this is not a complete listing.

In Jewish thought ritual uncleanness was not sinful except in the case of
the modes of contracting uncleanness that were specifically forbidden such as in
Vayikra / Leviticus 12:43. The question I would like to present for discussion is
45 whether uncleanness was important to the ancient Hebrew? Outside of one's need
for ritual cleanliness while visiting the Beit HaMikdash (Temple in Jerusalem)
and eating a portion of the sacrifice, was being in a state of uncleanness important
to the ancient Hebrew? In other words, was the state of uncleanness something to
be aware of in ones daily activities if one were not going to (i) visit the Beit
50 HaMikdash or (ii) not be under some requirement for remaining clean such as in
the vow of a nazir (nazirite)? I believe the Torah, and the Ketuvei Shelachim
suggests there is an intrinsic value for the state of ritual purity in the mind of the
ancient Hebrew and thus ritual purity was always very desirable in one's day-to-
day life.

55 Intrinsic value describes a characteristic or property of some thing or
action which is "essential" and "specific" to the particular object or thing. I want
to use this in relation to the life of a believer in the Messiah Yeshua. Ritual purity
should be an intrinsic property of one who places their faith in Yeshua. We can
understand this from what Yeshua said concerning the importance of ritual purity
60 in our lives. Yeshua was very concerned about ritual impurity while he was
speaking to the Pharisees in *Matthew 15:10-14*. In fact, Yeshua was extending
the boundaries of ritual purity beyond what people encountered externally and
further included what people generated from within their hearts also constituted a
major purity issue. Defilement in people's lives is created by the inner life and
65 moral choices that lay behind their words and deeds because as we know faith is
best lived out and not purely spiritualized. The Ketuvei Shelachim has Yeshua
speaking on purity issues over hand washing with the Pharisees:

Matthew 15:10-14

70 *15:10 After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, 'Hear and
understand. 15:11 'It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the
man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.' 15:12
Then the disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees
were offended when they heard this statement?' 15:13 But He answered
75 and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be*

uprooted. 15:14 'Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.' (NASB)

80 Here Yeshua is explaining the hypocrisy of this and other traditions and practices of the day by getting to the central issue on what defiles a person comes not from the outside but from the inside, from within. This does not negate the importance of the external sources for contracting Tumah but deals with what are the motivations behind one's reluctance to obey G-d's Holy instructions. Yeshua said what is most important is what comes out of your heart than what comes into your mouth. Yeshua stated "*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, and evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All of these come from the within and defile a man.*" (see *Matthew 23:21-23*). Now some of these same qualities are also listed in *Galatians 5:19-21* as "works of the flesh." 90 They are contrasted with the "fruit of the Spirit" (see *Galatians 5:22-23*). There is a direct connection here between purity of our thoughts and that of external actions. Does this indicate ritual purity is wholly independent of our thought life and faith in Yeshua today?

95 Classical Christian hermeneutics concerning the interpretation on these verses suggest the need for ritual purity has passed away and including all of the Torah outside of loving our neighbor as ourselves, loving G-d, and believing in Yeshua. These verses here in *Matthew* are not a cancelation of the Torah but call for a "higher standard." Is it interesting after Yeshua's resurrection he maintained the mitzvah (command) for ritual purity by telling Mary not to touch him.

Translation

"touch me not"

100 **John 20:17**

20:17 *λεγει αυτη ο ιησους μη μου απτου ουπω γαρ αναβεβηκα προς τον πατερα μου πορευου δε προς τους αδελφους μου και ειπε αυτοις αναβαινω προς τον πατερα μου και πατερα υμων και θεον μου και θεον υμων*

105 **John 20:17**

20:17 *Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. (KJV)*

110 Understand what has just happened, Mary had been to the grave and seen Yeshua's body was missing. Having been inside the grave she would have contracted Tumah and become tamei (unclean). Yeshua had not yet entered into the Heavenly holy of holies to offer atonement in his blood and thus commanded Mary to "touch me not." In the text here we have Yeshua maintaining ritual 115 purity. There is definitely something to be said about ritual purity.

Conclusion

120 If Yeshua called for a higher standard and himself after the resurrection forbid from being touched until after having entered into the presence of the Lord to offer his own blood, how important is ritual purity for us today? Purity for the

heart is of utmost importance especially in a relationship with the Lord. But do we really understand what it means today to have purity of heart? The role of
125 purity in heart is directly connected to our obedience to the Lord according to the Torah. This should be obvious looking at the text there is a connection between the physical and the spiritual acts of purity. If this is the case what should be said about the modes of ritual purity for our lives today? How we eat, how we live, and the way we worship the Lord shouldn't we be living as the Torah instructs?
130 Yeshua did not come to do away with ritual purity.

Something else to think about, Yeshua and his talmudim (disciples) spoke authoritatively that the scriptures spoke of these things which are taking place and have taken place. What authority did they rely upon? They spoke upon the
135 authority of the Torah, the Neviim (Prophets), and the Ketuvim (Writings). Our salvation, our atonement in Yeshua's blood, our faith in the Messiah are all based upon the authority of the Word of G-d found within the Torah, so why has the Torah become minimized today in the life of the Christian believer? Reading the book of Revelation, at the end of time, when G-d has made a new heaven and a near earth the scriptures indicate that ritual purity remains an important factor.
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Revelation 21:22-27

*21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the
145 Lamb are the temple of it. 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 21:24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 21:25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 21:26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that **defileth**, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. (KJV)*
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The word "defileth" is the third-person singular simple present indicative form of the word "defile" which means to be unclean. According to Oxford's English dictionary to defile is to desecrate or profane something sacred. From where do we understand defilement or uncleanness? We have our understanding of uncleanness and ritual purity from the Torah according to G-d's instruction.
160 From the text in Revelation ritual purity has a significant role in our dwelling with G-d and G-d dwelling with us. How important is remaining ritually pure today in our day-to-day lives?

The moral of the story is that our spiritual selves, what is in our heart, what we do physically and righteousness is not mutually exclusive. G-d gave us the Torah for sound reasons. True righteousness entails not only faith in Yeshua the Messiah, but also submission and obedience to all of G-d's Word (see *Tehillim / Psalms 119:172, Matthew 4:4, 5:17-19*) as a demonstration of our faith and the newness of life.
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170 Heavenly Father,

I want to be a blessing to you by obeying your Holy Words. I place my
faith in the shed blood of Yeshua the Messiah. Help me by your Holy Spirit to
begin living according to your instruction. Help me to also understand how to
175 begin living my life for you. Thank you for all you have done for me.

In Yeshua's name I pray. Amen.

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Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever

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