

תַּזְרִיעַ

TAZRIA/S^HALL CONCEIVE
Vayikra/Leviticus 12:1-13:59

מִצְרָע

METZORA/T^HE LEPROUS ONE
Vayikra/Leviticus 14:1-15:33

This week we have a double portion which will deal with the **regulations concerning tsara'at** (צִרְעַת - leprosy) and the **instructions for the metzora** (מִצְרָע - leprous one). If you were suffering from this affliction, it meant you were **ritually impure** and would **not** be able to **worship יהוה** by visiting the **Tabernacle/Temple**. Although often translated as **leprosy**, **tsara'at** (צִרְעַת) is more than likely a **supernatural disease** which **afflicted the skin and possessions** of those who spoke **inappropriate words**. According to the Scriptures, it is a **collective term** for many things that do **not necessarily resemble** each other. The following verses refer to **tsara'at on a person, his clothing, or his house**:

Vayikra 13:3 "The priest shall examine the sore on the skin of the body; and if the hair on the sore has turned white, and the sore appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is an infection of leprosy (צִרְעַת). Then the priest shall examine him, and pronounce him unclean.

Vayikra 13:51 "And he shall examine the plague on the seventh day. If the plague has spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, in the leather or in anything made of leather, the plague is an active leprosy (צִרְעַת). It is unclean.

Vayikra 14:44 "then the priest shall come and look; and indeed if the plague has spread in the house, it is an active leprosy (צִרְעַת) in the house. It is unclean.

The **ancient rabbis** generally agree that **tzara'at** refers **not to a bodily disease**, but to a **physical manifestation** of a **spiritual problem**. Therefore it becomes a **stern warning** designed to show the offender that he **must mend his ways**...it is a **supernatural, spiritual discipline**. In **Matthew 15**, we find that **Yeshua** agrees with the rabbis on this:

Matthew 15:18 "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. ¹⁹"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. ²⁰"These are the things which defile a man...

Lashon hara, the **evil tongue** commonly associated with **gossip**, is very **serious** in Elohim's eyes. If you think about it, it is probably one of the **most widely disobeyed of all His commandments**. **Vayikra 19** teaches:

Vayikra 19:16 'You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people...

Ya'acov, the **brother of Yeshua**, also teaches:

James 4:11 Do not speak evil of one another...

James 3:5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

Yeshua refers to the **consequences for negative words**:

Matthew 12:35 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. ³⁶ "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

Sha'ul (Paul) also speaks to how **words** can **tear down a community or a family**:

2 Corinthians 12:20 For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults;

Words are **powerful**...it was by the **Word of Elohim** that the **creation** came into **existence**. The following verse gives us the **first recorded words** of Scripture on the **first day of creation**:

Bereshith 1:3 Then Elohim said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

Since we know that the **sun, moon, and the stars** were **not created until day 4**, this **light** on **day 1** was a **special light**. **Judaism** teaches that the **light** of the world is **hidden in the Word** of the **Torah**. As **believers**, we would agree with that...and also see the **Light of the World in the Living Word**:

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with Yah, and the Word was Yah.² He was in the beginning with Yah.³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it...¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For it is Elohim who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of Yah in the face of Yeshua the Messiah.

Words are **spoken**...words are **heard**...and words are **responded to**. This is the **basis** of a **relationship**. The **Israelites** entered into a **relationship** when the **Word of Elohim spoke** to them from **Mount Sinai**. They **heard and responded** to that **Word** when they said "yes" to the **covenant** and **entered into an intimate relationship** with their **Elohim**. Now, **tzara'at** becomes the **symbol** that the **relationship** has been **damaged**...by "words"...the **very means** through which the children of Israel **first entered into that relationship**.

The words the Almighty gave to the Israelites were **Spiritual Words**. The words we speak are also **from the spirit** because **we use the breath of life** that the **Father has given us to speak them**. Because words are so important, we are going to focus on them a bit more. The following is a profound quote from **Rambam** (emphasis mine):

"This is the way of those **wicked people** who sit and mock: **first they speak nonsense**...and then it **leads to speaking badly** about the **righteous**...and **then they will speak badly** of the **prophets** and **find fault in their words**...and this will **eventually lead to a denial of God** and the **principles of faith**...**gossip** is not so much a problem in itself, but it **represents the planting of a seed for future ills**. It is the **initiation of a slow, downward path**."

Rambam is speaking of **two types of abuse**:

1. **Abuse of another person**
2. **Abuse of speech** itself

We **abuse a person** when we **directly or indirectly speak** of them in a **negative way**. As soon as the **words are uttered, irreparable damage** has been done. We **abuse speech** itself when what we speak is **neither positive nor constructive**. This can bring about a **regression** in the **speaker's character**, which can ultimately

lead to disastrous results. The point is...merely speaking nonsense can be an abuse of the gift of speech given to us by our Creator! Words have consequences. The Words of the Almighty always have purpose:

Isaiah 55:11 So shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

On the other hand, our words are often spoken thoughtlessly. It was an astonishing sight to see tsara'at. It was a disfiguring disease. It was a symbol and symptom of evil speech. For we truly become disfigured when we use words to condemn, not communicate. Those who abused others with their words were themselves afflicted. Language is a great gift to mankind, and it must be guarded if it is to achieve the purpose for which it was sent. If Yeshua is the living Word, then our words should reflect our relationship with Him at all times!

With the subject of disease being the main focus of our readings this week, you may wonder why our first parasha is named Tazria, referring to conception and birth. What is the connection? Bear in mind that Elohim's punishments are aimed at helping the sufferer correct his ill ways and begin a new life - corrected of his former faults. So...as we begin our parasha, alluding to conception and birth, it teaches us that just like the case of tzara'at, all the rituals of the Torah are intended to help a person have a spiritual rebirth in their lives by correcting their past ways and starting anew.

It is also interesting that the purification processes for a "person" and a "house" bear much resemblance to one another:

Purification of the person (metzora):

Vayikra 14:4 "then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. ⁵ "And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. ⁶ "As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. ⁷ "And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.

Purification of the house:

Vayikra 14:49 "And he shall take, to cleanse the house, two birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. ⁵⁰ "Then he shall kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water; ⁵¹ "and he shall take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times. ⁵² "And he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird and the running water and the living bird, with the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the scarlet. ⁵³ "Then he shall let the living bird loose outside the city in the open field, and make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.

There are many parallels between the processes for the person and the house; however, there is one important difference. The house is both made clean AND atoned for through the process, but the metzora is only made clean by the ritual (Vayikra 14:4-7). It is only after sacrifices have been made and oil has been placed upon him, that he is atoned for:

Vayikra 14:18 "The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed. So the priest shall make atonement for him before יהוה. ¹⁹ "Then the priest shall offer the sin offering, and make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness. Afterward he

shall kill the burnt offering.²⁰ "And the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean.

Before we consider these differences, let's consider the **concept of a "house"**. The Scriptures will give us our best **description**:

*Shemot/Exodus 40:38 For the cloud of אלהים was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of **all the house of Israel**, throughout all their journeys.*

*Joshua 21:45 Not a word failed of any good thing which אלהים had spoken to the **house of Israel**. All came to pass.*

*Isaiah 5:7 For the vineyard of אלהים of hosts is **the house of Israel**, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant...*

*Isaiah 48:1 "Hear this, O **house of Jacob**, Who are called by the name of Israel, And have come forth from the wellsprings of Judah; Who swear by the name of אלהים, And make mention of the Elohim of Israel, But not in truth or in righteousness;*

*Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, says אלהים, when **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel** and with the house of Judah –*

*Matthew 15:24 But He answered and said, "**I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**"*

*Hebrews 3:1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, **Yeshua the Messiah**,² who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moshe also was faithful in all His house.³ For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moshe, inasmuch as **He who built the house has more honor than the house.**⁴ For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is Elohim.⁵ And Moshe indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward,⁶ but **Messiah as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.***

Back to our parasha...we now can look at the **"house with tzara'at"** as **symbolic of a problem within the household of Israel, the believing community of faith**. The house is made up of **individuals** who have already **achieved their atonement through sacrifice** (points to **Yeshua**) and **oil** (points to the **Holy Spirit**). At times **these believers** fell short and were **brought back to repentance** through the **reminder of tzara'at**.

The **"house"**, because it was **made up of believers** (already atoned for through the offerings), **did not require sacrifices** after it was **declared clean**. However, upon discovery, the **tzara'at on the house** pointed to a **problem within a family or a community**. **If not corrected**, it would lead to the **demolition of the entire structure/fellowship**.

A couple of chapters from now, we again encounter the concept of **"atonement"** in connection with a **"house"** when the **High Priest** performs the service on **Yom Kippur**:

Vayikra 16:3 "Thus Aharon shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering...⁶ " Aharon shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house...¹¹ " And Aharon shall bring the bull

of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which is for himself.

In the **Levitical priesthood**, once a year, offerings for the **atonement of the house were required**. Now, as a result of the **death and resurrection of Messiah**, we have entered into the **priesthood of Melchizedek** where this **year after year sacrifice for the atonement of the “house”** is no longer necessary.

These words of **Peter** seem to tell the **story** of how **His “house”** is to be **built today**:

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ² as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, ³ if indeed you have tasted that Adonai is gracious. ⁴ Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by Elohim and precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Elohim through Yeshua the Messiah.

One more question. **Why does tzara’at not occur today?** Here is a quote from **Likutei Torah**:

“Physically, **tzara’at** is a **superficial affliction**. This indicates that the **victim** is in a **healthy spiritual state internally**, and that he has **merely erred in a superficial manner**. Consequently, **those who are not in a good spiritual state internally** (as is the case nowadays) **do not require a miraculous sign** that something is wrong superficially, since there are **more serious internal problems** that need to be **addressed first**.”

We’ve got a long ways to go, friends. I’ve got a prayer to end with:

Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O יהיה, my strength and my Redeemer.

Amen!

Shabbat Shalom!

Ardelle