

Torah Portion

M'tsora

Leviticus 14:1-15:33

Haftarah

2 Kings 7:3-20

- M'tsora- "infected one"

*The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "This shall be the law of the **leprous person** for the day of his cleansing.*

(Lev 14:1-2)

- This week our Torah portion will be part two of a doubled portion when read in non-leap years
- Our portion this week continues with the person afflicted with biblical leprosy, or tzaraat

- One who has tzaraat is a m'tsora, or 'infected one'
- Last weeks portion covered the detailed process of examining the person for all the different ways tzaraat could manifest
- This week, we will cover the process for cleansing the m'tsora once the signs and symptoms have been removed
- Remember that tzaraat is a spiritual disease caused primarily by 'Lashan-harah' which means evil speech or slander

- We spoke about this last week, so let's go back to Numbers 12 to get more context:

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. And they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard it. Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth. And suddenly the LORD said to Moses and to Aaron and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tent of meeting."

And the three of them came out. And the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent and called Aaron and Miriam, and they both came forward. And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed. When the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, like snow. And Aaron turned toward Miriam, and behold, she was leprous. (Num 12:1-10)

- Here we have the text book case of Lashon-harah with the punishment of tzaraat
- Moses does intercede for his sister and she is healed, but we'll cover this in more detail in it's Torah portion
- There is one other time we see someone afflicted with tzaraat in the 5 books of Moses, do you remember where it was?
- It's back in Exodus 4, where God is tasking a reluctant Moses to return to Egypt to free Israel, his people

- God tells Moses that He's sending him to the Elder's and let's Moses know that 'they will listen to you'

Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" (Ex 4:1)

- Moses spoke Lashon-harah against his brothers, essentially saying they would not have faith, and he just told God that what He said wouldn't happen
- God gives Moses a sign of his staff becoming a serpent

- He tell's Moses to pick it up with his hand, and it becomes a staff again
- God then tells Moses:

Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. (Ex 4:6-7)

- So Moses gets a touch of tzaraat after his minor infraction of lashon-harah
- I think its also interesting that Adonai made him pick up the serpent by the tail with his hand, like God is showing him ‘through Me, you will be able to control the serpent (Pharaoh)’
- But the same thing that controlled the serpent, the hand representing Moses, was also turned leprous for lashon-harah, at least temporarily

- Let's get back to this weeks portion:

He shall be brought to the priest, and the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall look. Then, if the case of leprous disease is healed in the leprous person, the priest shall command them to take for him who is to be cleansed two live clean birds and cedarwood and scarlet yarn and hyssop. And the priest shall command them to kill one of the birds in an earthenware vessel over fresh water. He shall take the live bird with the cedarwood and the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, and dip them and the live bird

in the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the leprous disease. Then he shall pronounce him clean and shall let the living bird go into the open field.
(Ex 12:2-7)

- The purification process for someone healed of tzaraat is a three step process, and this is step 1
- The sages see the use of birds in this process as related to the sin of lashon-harah/gossip (a little birdie told me...)

- They also see the other implements of the service representing the m'tsora's change from proud and haughty to someone with the fruit of repentance
- The cedar tree is very tall and can represent the pride and haughtiness that brought about the tzaraat
- The scarlet dye comes from a lowly insect and the hyssop was a lowly weed-like plant, both representing the humility of repentance
- Rabbi Fohrman also sees a parallel to the Exodus story

- Like he often says, ‘where have we seen this before?’
- he sees the doorpost and lintel image in the cedar wood, along with the hyssop they used to apply the blood
- The blood of the passover lamb is scarlet like the dyed yarn
- What about the two birds? One is killed and the other is released, like the final plague, the death of the firstborn
- Those without faith lost their firstborn, but those that applied the blood of the lamb were set free

- As the children of Israel were separated under slavery, after the passover, they were birthed into a people, a community
- A leper is separated by his sin, but when he repents and is healed, the symbols of passover are used to birth him back into his people, his community

And he who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. And after that he may come into the camp, but live outside his tent seven days.

And on the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair from his head, his beard, and his eyebrows. He shall shave off all his hair, and then he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean. (Lev 14:8-9)

- This is step 2 of the purification process
- The text focuses on shaving the head and facial hair, since that's closer to the source of the sin, thoughts and speech, but the whole body would be shaved
- It's interesting that we now know through science that hair has memory

- What I mean by that it stores a chemical history
- We use hair follicle samples today for drug testing that will show drug use evidence going back for months
- By the m'tsora shaving all their hair, they are in fact beginning anew, removing the past evidence and memory of their sin
- After shaving, the clothes and body is washed, and they are clean. A new/renewed creation!

“And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish, and a grain offering of three tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, and one log of oil. And the priest who cleanses him shall set the man who is to be cleansed and these things before the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. (Lev 14:10-11)

- This is the 3rd step of the purification process
- The text will go on to say if he cannot afford this offering, it can be only 1 lamb, or 2 turtledoves or pigeons

The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and the priest shall put it on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. Then the priest shall take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand and dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand and sprinkle some oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. And some of the oil that remains in his hand the priest shall put on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering.

And 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. Then the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD.

(Lev 14:14-18)

- The commentary states: The blood is placed on these three body parts to symbolize that henceforth the m'tsora must improve himself in mind (ear), deed (thumb, representing action), and effort (big toe, representing forward movement)
- I see the application of oil in these areas as the equal need of the Holy Spirit to help control our mind, deeds, and efforts

- Beginning in verse 33, we cover the topic of a house that is infected with tzaraat and the procedures for purifying it
- The text tells us that this is when they are in the promised land, the land of Canaan, and that God himself will put the tzaraat on the house
- The section of Torah dealing with tzaraat ends with: *This is the law for any case of leprous disease: for an itch, for leprous disease in a garment or in a house, and for a swelling or an eruption or a spot, to show when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the law for leprous disease.* (Lev 14:54-57)

- It's thought if a person is becoming involved in a sin that will lead to becoming a m'tsora, that God will first infect his home
- If he doesn't get the hint and change, God will infect his garment, something a little closer to him personally
- If he still won't change, the tzaraat will be placed on the person
- Chapter 15 covers various bodily discharges that will put someone in an unclean state to differing degrees

The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any man has a discharge from his body, his discharge is unclean. And this is the law of his uncleanness for a discharge: whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is blocked up by his discharge, it is his uncleanness. (Lev 15:1-3)

- Verses 1-18 cover discharges from a male
- The Hebrew word translated as discharge is Zav, and is some kind of issue that's not normal in most uses of the word

- As we've covered before, uncleanness is contagious and can be transmitted to other people or items
- Also, most of the prescriptions for dealing with any of these items involves washing with water
- Throughout history, the Jewish people have be blamed for many plagues or disease outbreaks in the world
- This is because the Jews in those areas were either slightly affected or not affected at all by these killer outbreaks, so 'they must be the problem'

- When the truth of the matter is the Jews were following these commandments in the Torah, isolating, limiting what you come in contact with, and washing routinely
- All this while the rest of the world hadn't figured out how germs worked and avoided bathing to avoid becoming sick? Time for your monthly bath...

“When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. (Lev 15:19)

- Verses 19-30 cover discharges from women
- As we discussed last week, the woman's normal monthly cycle is known as 'niddah', and is discussed here
- Remember that 'niddah' doesn't refer to the blood, but rather her period of separation, primarily separation of intimacy with her husband
- This section also covers discharges that are not normal and the procedure for each situation
- Our portion ends with this summary:

“Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.”

This is the law for him who has a discharge and for him who has an emission of semen, becoming unclean thereby; also for her who is unwell with her menstrual impurity, that is, for anyone, male or female, who has a discharge, and for the man who lies with a woman who is unclean.

(Lev 15:31-33)

- As the text states, the primary importance of the laws of clean and unclean is the ‘defiling the Tabernacle in our midst’, because the consequence could be death!
- Since there is no standing Tabernacle or Temple today, the chances of literal death are a lot lower...
- But we are the temple of God, collectively and individually
- God, in rebuking rebellious Israel, says this in Ezekiel:

Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. (Ezk 22:26)

- God takes seriously some of the things we haven't in the past, especially the issues of clean and unclean
- **Let's do our part, as best we can, to live up to the awesome covenant we have been graciously grafted into**

- **Yeshua came and walked the Torah perfectly, not so we don't have to, but to show us it can be done and give us the example to follow**
- I pray this teaching has been edifying
- Let's lift up the name of the Holy One, with Love in Echad
- Shalom