

# Parasha Metzora and Tazaria

- Leviticus 12:1-13:59
- 2 Kings 4:42-5:19a
- Luke 7:18-35

## **AND**

- Leviticus 14:1-15:33
- 2 Kings 7:3-20
- Matthew 23:16-24:2, 30-31



## The Torah Portion at a Glance

The Parasha of Tazaria continues the discussion of the laws of Tumah v'Taharah, ritual impurity and purity.

A woman giving birth should undergo a process of purification, which includes immersing in a mikvah (a naturally gathered pool of water) and bringing offerings to the Holy Temple. All male infants are to be circumcised on the eighth day of life.

Tzaraat ("leprosy") is a supra-natural plague, which also can afflict garments. If white or pink patches appear on a person's skin (dark red or green in garments), a Cohen / priest is summoned. Judging by various signs, such as an increase in size of the afflicted area after a seven-day quarantine, the Cohen pronounces it tameh (impure) or tahor (pure).

A person afflicted with tzaraat must dwell alone outside of the camp (or city) until he is healed. The afflicted area in a garment is removed; if the tzaraat spreads or recurs, the entire garment must be burned.

This second portion is Metzora and begins by detailing how the recovered metzora / infected is purified by the Cohen (priest) with a special procedure involving two birds, spring water in an earthen vessel, a piece cedar wood, a scarlet thread and a bundle of hyssop.

A home can also be afflicted with "leprosy" by the appearance of dark red or green patches on its walls. In a process lasting as long as nineteen days, a Cohen determines if the house can be purified or it must be demolished.

Ritual impurity is also engendered through a seminal or other discharge in a man, and menstruation or other discharge of blood in a woman, necessitating purification through immersion in a mikvah.

(adapted from chabad.org)

## The Messiah in the Torah Portion

This week's Torah reading is usually a double portion of Scripture unless it is separated during a leap year. The subject matter is similar in both sections as the laws of ritual purity are discussed. These

verses have much application for us today if we will study the Torah with an open mind and allow the Ruach HaKodesh to speak through the living word.

First, consider that most people will acknowledge that “Jesus was born a Jew.” What most people don’t want to accept is the fact that he never lost his Jewish heritage. He was given the Hebrew name “Y’shua” and circumcised on the eighth day. His life was spent in joyous obedience to the Law of Moses and he never once violated the written word’s commands. When he died upon a tree, Y’shua took mankind’s sin upon Himself and became accursed.

The life of Y’shua started in obedience to the Torah. In Luke chapter two, the mother of Y’shua followed the exact precepts given in our Torah portion. Messiah was circumcised on the eighth day and his mother Mary, or “Miriam” in Hebrew, came to the temple and offered the prescribed sacrifices. “And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Y’shua, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the Torah of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to YHWH,” Luke 2:21-22. This passage is amazing to as it shows us that Y’shua was born in obedience to the Torah and continued his entire life in submission. It is also telling to reflect on the fact that Miriam waited to approach the temple until “the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were completed.” This means that Miriam waited for forty days to bring a sacrifice to signify that her days of impurity were complete. Miriam’s offering of two turtle-dove birds, according to Luke 2:24, illustrates that her family was not well-off financially but willing to sacrifice what they had in order to obey the Torah. There is much to be learned from these examples.

Finally, the “blood of purification” time that Miriam observed was in accordance to our Torah portion as well. “Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering,” Leviticus 12:4,6. The birth of Y’shua was in accordance to the Torah. This included his mother observing the “blood of purification” so that Y’shua Himself could offer His blood as purification for the world.

## **Applying the Portion to Life Today**

It has been suggested that there is a possibility that the Messiah was stricken with the horrible skin disease spoken of in this Torah portion. Modern translations refer to this disorder as at type of “leprosy.” Could Y’shua have taken upon Himself the infirmities of mankind in the form of leprosy?

The disease in our portion is not “leprosy” or Hansen’s disease as we understand it today but something far worse called “tzaraat.” This infection would rot the flesh and disfigure the body while causing tremendous pain. Even houses, walls, and fabrics could become tainted with this sickness. Bible scholars agree that tzaraat could be contracted through natural and supernatural means as in the Bible; tzaraat was a type of spiritual judgment for sin and is the only disease that renders a person unclean. It was a horrible plague that forced contagious lepers to walk separately from others and shout out the warning, “Unclean! Unclean!”

The idea of a sick savior seems totally ridiculous to many believers who insist that Y’shua never stumped his toe or caught the common cold. The Messiah healed “all who were oppressed by the devil” but why wasn’t the physician able to heal himself? The Jewish Talmud calls the Messiah the

“Leper of the house of study” and several writings in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Indeed, the healing of leprosy was a sure sign that the Messiah had come. “Y’shua answered and said to them, Go and show John/Yochanan again those things that you do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them and are acquitted. And blessed is he, who shall not be offended by Me,” Matthew 11:4, 5. Wouldn’t people be offended of a Messiah with tzaraat?

It makes sense to believe the Scriptures at face value when it says Y’shua “took our diseases” upon Himself. Isaiah 53:4 states that “surely our griefs He Himself bore.” The word for grief here in Hebrew is actually sickness, like tzaraat. The Amplified Bible clearly shows this in Isaiah 53:4, “Surely He has borne our griefs (sicknesses, weaknesses, and distresses) and carried our sorrows and pains [of punishment], yet we [ignorantly] considered Him stricken, smitten, and afflicted by YHWH [as if with leprosy].”

In the book, Tears in a Bottle, author William Bragg wrote, “The transliterated Hebrew words “naga” used in Isaiah 53:4 and “nega”, used in Isaiah 53:8 are used almost exclusively in the Scriptures to describe the plague of leprosy! Nega (Neh'-gah, Strong's #5161) and naga (Na-gah', Strongs # 5060) are used repeatedly in the Scriptures in connection with being stricken or plagued with the marks of leprosy! Initially leprosy manifests itself as light spots or marks on the skin, which later evolve into severe festering boils of puss! Leprosy causes the hands and the feet to become severely clawed, knurled, and disfigured! Fingers and toes get shorter because of bone loss and they become pitifully distorted! The face and the eyes are severely deformed as the nose sinks into distorted facial muscles, which over time causes a multitude of eye abnormalities and eventual blindness! Before the time of Constantine, the followers of YHWH’s narrow Way were well aware that Y’shua had leprosy! They knew that the appearance of Y’shua was vile and repulsive! They also knew that by the end, Y’shua didn’t even look human anymore, just as the book of Isaiah had reported! However, in the years, after Constantine, the Messiah Y’shua was depicted by Rome as having perfect physical beauty and form! Of course, that image is completely opposite from the TRUTH, but that’s still the image of ideal beauty that “Jesus” is depicted in today!”

The Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98b, in reference to Isaiah 53:4 states: ... What is his [the Messiah's] name?-"The School of R. Shila said: His name is Shiloh, for it is written, until Shiloh come. The School of R. Yannai said: His name is Yinnon, for it is written, His name shall endure forever: e'er the sun was, his name is Yinnon. The School of R. Haninah maintained: His name is Haninah, as it is written, Where I will not give you Haninah. Others say: His name is Menachem the son of Hezekiah, for it is written, Because Menachem ['the comforter'], that would relieve my soul, is far. The Rabbis said: His name is 'the leper scholar,' as it is written, Surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of YHWH, and afflicted."

Tzaraat was not always contagious nor was it necessarily a death sentence. The Messiah’s leprosy would have certainly been the non-contagious kind as He often walked in the midst of crowds and often visited the temple. If Y’shua had the disease tzaraat then He would have also been in no danger in sitting with other lepers. His diagnosis of this disease would clarify many puzzling Scriptures like Psalm 38 and Psalm 22.

In Matthew 8 the Messiah healed a leper through touch and therefore was made unclean. “And, see, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Master, if You will, You can make me clean. Will You heal me? And Y’shua put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed,” Mathew 8:2, 3. So, did Y’shua have tzaraat? Was the Messiah a leper?

It is truly unknown if the Messiah walked the earth with this dreadful disease and it is disturbing just to consider the idea. However, removing the Messiah from the comfortable box we our theologies have made for him is good for the soul as it allows us to more full appreciate His life and His sacrifice.

## **Portion Points to Ponder**

1. The Hebrew names for this portion are “Metzora” and “Tazaria.” What does these mean?
2. Read 2 Kings 4:42-5:19a and 7:3-20. How does this relate to the story of Leviticus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Luke 7:18-35 and Matthew 23:16-24:2, 30-31. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y’shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week’s Torah portion to your life.
6. In Tazaria what does childbirth remind the children of Yisrael?
7. What specific transgression does the experience of childbirth bring to remembrance?
8. Why is a woman unclean during her menstrual cycle?
9. Is it a sin to be ritually impure/unclean? What does it mean to be ritually unclean?
10. What is the offering that YHWH requires after the birth of a child supposed to remind the participants of?
11. What is YHWH declaring when a male child is circumcised?
12. Why would YHWH command circumcision in Leviticus 12:3 if the custom was already practiced by the Hebrew people?
13. The word 'tzaraat' is popularly translated as 'leprosy'. Is this the most accurate meaning?
14. Explain the difference between a burnt offering and a sin offering. Why would these need to be discussed during this week’s Torah portion reading?
15. For what sins was 'tzaraat' a Divine punishment?
16. What categories of garments could acquire 'tzaraat'?
17. The Torah does not make clear what is meant by blood purification. How come the mother is unclean only seven days if she gives birth to a boy?
18. The Torah doesn't state what causes the blood to purify. What do you think makes blood a purifying agent?
19. How does YHWH make the sacrifices for purity accessible for all rich and poor people? See Leviticus 12:7-8
20. What do you think makes menstrual flow unclean?
21. Leviticus 12:6 speaks about the completion of her period of purification for either son or daughter; she shall bring to the priest, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering and a pigeon or turtledove for a sin offering. In what ways can animal sacrifice enable a person to become pure again?
22. Why should a woman who bears a child become unclean?
23. What was so sinful after childbirth that a sin offering is required?
24. In ancient times, who were the “doctors” that diagnosed skin disease and sickness?

25. Leviticus 13:47-46 says, "He shall be unclean as long as the disease is on him. Being unclean, he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside the camp." In what way does disease make one unclean?
26. Was Tazaria leprosy or a different skin disorder?
27. How can you relate this disease with other bodily discharges that make people unclean?
28. How serious do you think uncleanness is, so that unclean people must dwell outside the camp? Is uncleanness contagious?
29. Leviticus 13:47-48 says, "When an eruptive affection occurs in a cloth of wool or linen fabric, in the warp or in the woof of the linen or the wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin." Is it possible that some kind of diseases affect cloth or skins? What would you call such a disease?
30. Why would the priests be interested in affected cloth or skins?
31. A woman after giving birth is tamei (has a ritual impurity). What is the status of a woman who has a miscarriage?
32. Read Leviticus 13:45-46. How should a person with Tazaria behave?
33. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of sacrifices. Which are they?
34. Who determines whether a person is ritual clean or unclean?
35. If the priest sees that the tzaraat has spread after one week, how does he rule?
36. How does the "seventh day" play an important role in the purification of skin disorders?
37. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair is indicative of uncleanness?
38. What signs of mourning must a metzora/leper display?
39. Why must a metzora call out, "Tamei! Tamei!" or "Unclean! Unclean!"?
40. Why is a metzora/leper commanded to dwell in isolation?
41. What must be done to a garment that has tzaraat? How can a fabric contain leprosy?
42. Why does the metzora/leper require birds in the purification process?
43. In the purification process of a metzora, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
44. How can a house have a plague of mold or streaks? Does this happen today?
45. In the tabernacle, when the metzora was presented "before YHWH" (14:11), where did he stand?
46. What happens to the vessels that are in a house which was found to have tzaraat?
47. Why do bodily discharges make a person unclean?
48. When a person enters a house that has tzaraat, when do his clothes become unclean?
49. What is the overall theme of this parasha? What are the subdivisions, if any?
50. How does the Torah suggest hand washing as a type of cleansing in this portion? When did science finally agree with the importance of washing?
51. Why would the birth of a girl cause a woman to be ritually impure for twice the length of time as the birth of a boy? (Try to think of a non-sexist answer!)
52. Why would a woman have to bring a sin offering after giving birth?
53. Read Leviticus 15 verses 16 and 18. Does this mean that a person should shower and wash their bed clothes immediately after having relations with his wife?
54. The laws of niddah are discussed in Leviticus 15. What is niddah? How can a person keep these commandments today?
55. In Parasha Tazaria, YHWH tells Moses that male infants are to be circumcised on the eighth day. Tradition says that the number eight represents one day more than the period of creation, reminding us that it takes human intervention to perfect YHWH's creation. Can you think of other ways in which human culture perfects the natural gifts that YHWH has given us?
56. Leprosy, now known as Hansen's disease, was a very disfiguring disease and the people who suffered from it were often shunned by society. Although Hansen's disease is very rare in our time, there are other ailments whose victims are shunned by society. What do you think you could do to become more comfortable with such people?

57. Leviticus 15:31 seems to explain the ritual impurity laws and their affects upon worship. What does this verse mean to you? How can you apply this week's Torah portion to your personal life?
58. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

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