

**August 26, 2018 - Lev. 12:1 – 13:59 - Birthing purity; Leprosy**  
**Torah reading: Leviticus 12:1 – 13:59 - Birthing purity; Leprosy**  
**Psalm 78:17-39**  
**Haftarah: Isaiah 9:5-6 + 11:1-9**  
**Isaiah 7:20 – 8:3 + 9:6**

### **Uncleanness at Birth**

**Leviticus 12:1-2** - "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean."

Rashi - Rabbi Simlai said: "Just as in the Creation, man was created after all domestic animals, wild beasts, and birds, so too, the law [concerning the cleanness] of man is stated after the law [concerning the cleanness] of domestic animals, wild beasts, and birds."- [Vayikra Rabbah 14:1]

"according to the days of the separation for her infirmity" - i.e. she will be unclean as when she experiences menstrual bleeding (described later in **Leviticus 15:19**)

### **Why is the mother ceremonially unclean?**

**1. Birth** (after the Fall of Adam and Eve) imparts a sinful nature in need of redemption.

The original blessing, "Increase and multiply" (**Genesis 1:28**), has become for the fallen race a direful curse, and communicates sin and misery. - *Matthew Henry's Commentary*

Nevertheless, since Abraham and Sarah's miracle of the birth of Isaac, as well as the promise of the Deliverer/Messiah coming through his line, fertility and childbearing were of great importance in Israel.

**2. Blood** and semen that were not incorporated in the creation of a new life rendered people unclean. Thus a menstrual flow was the enrichment intended to create a new life, and because it did not achieve its purpose, it made the woman unclean as it came out. The same for semen that did not incorporate into a new child. Anything that was "left over" from the sex act made one unclean.

Other kinds of "issues" that had to do with fertility did the same (see **Leviticus 15**) - a continuing discharge from the sexual organs was defiling. Any continual drainage of what was supposed to be on the inside of a living human being onto the outside indicated death, not life. So a man with a discharge from a venereal disease, or a woman - like the one Jesus healed with an "issue of blood" - were deemed unclean.

**Leviticus 12:3** - "And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."

Abraham and all his "seed" were to "walk before me faithfully and be

blameless" (**Genesis 17:1**). Circumcision that marked a Jew as a part of God's covenant with Abraham also set apart his sexual conduct - mainly to both increase Israel and in hopes for the birth of Messiah. Adultery that would confuse genealogies was forbidden. Taking wives from Gentile nations was also banned. The rules or uncleanness ensured that sexual activity would be "fruitful" and occur at times when conception was likely.

The reason for all these clean and unclean regulations was this:

"So they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them" (**Leviticus 15:31**).

Why circumcision on "the eighth day" - Targum of Jonathan: Because on the eighth day the first period of the mother's extreme state of impurity ceases, and she no more imparts defilement to whomever or whatever she touches.

- **Luke 2:21** - "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb."

**Leviticus 12:4** - "And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled."

Rashi - although she may see blood [issued from her], she is ritually clean. — [Torath Kohanim 12:15]

During these 33 days, which constituted the second stage of uncleanness, the mother could engage in sexual relations and was only debarred from touching holy things (if she was a priest's wife), such as first tithes, the flesh of thank- and peace-offerings, and from entering the sanctuary. Having bathed at the end of the seven days which constituted the first and defiling period, she could now partake of the second tithes, and resume conjugal intercourse, since any blood that might now appear was regarded as pure blood, in contradistinction to the (*dam nidah*) blood of monthly courses. - *Ellicott's Commentary*

(The Sadducees, in contrast, insisted the mother was debarred from sexual relations throughout this whole period).

The total time of uncleanness was 40 days.

**Leviticus 12:5** - "But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days."

i.e. twice the time period as a male.

### Why the difference with a female baby?

Possibly because the rite of circumcision in the males served to end her impurity sooner. i.e. the the male child's own spilled blood bears part of the purification for his mother.

**Leviticus 12:6-7** - "And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female."

**Leviticus 12:8** - "And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles (turtledoves), or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean."

The meaning of all these purity laws was fulfilled when Jesus was presented at the Temple:

- **Luke 2:22-24** - "And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Simeon, who had been "waiting for the consolation of Israel," exclaimed:

- **Luke 2:29-32** - "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

Jesus was the "seed" of Abraham who would "walk before me faithfully and be blameless."

He was the Life - about whom all these rules regarding purity issues pertained.

- **John 11:25-26** - "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live.'"

His blood and sacrifice obtained redemption for us all!

### Uncleanness Caused by Leprosy

These chapters deal with  
(1) leprosy of man (Leviticus 13:2-46);

(2) leprosy of garments (Leviticus 13:47-59); and  
 (3) leprosy of houses (Leviticus 14:33-57).

**Leviticus 13:1-2** - "And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, a scab, or bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh like the plague of leprosy; then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto one of his sons the priests:"

The Jewish scriptures leave some of these words untranslated:

"If a man has a *se'eith*, a *sappachath*, or a *bahereth* on the skin of his flesh, and it forms a lesion of *tzara'ath* on the skin of his flesh, he shall be brought to Aaron the kohen, or to one of his sons, the *kohanim*."

skin = *owr* - skin, hide of an animal - from a root "to be exposed, be bared, be laid bare and naked" Poetically used for the life of a person

flesh = *basar* - flesh, human body, kindred, nakedness, humanity, all creatures, meat

rising = *se'eth* - rising, swelling. Also dignity, excellency, lifting up of self

scab = *sappachath* - an eruption, scab, lesion. The mange (as making the hair fall off)

bright spot = *bohereth* - white patch of skin, inflammation, possible sign of leprosy

plague = *nega`* - stroke, wound, mark, blow, infliction and thus a spot indicating a plague of leprosy. (The tractate of the Mishna regarding Leprosy is called Negaim).

leprosy = *tzara'ath* - in humans, a skin disease judged unclean; in houses and clothing a kind of mildew or spreading mold that causes uncleanness.

### Constant Examinations

Those who were judged by a priest to be unclean with leprosy were shut up, away from the congregation for a period of time, and if found to be "leprous" were sent to live outside the camp. Probably few cases of leprosy were determined, but the constant examinations when anything appeared on the skin kept the children of Israel focused on applying the Law to their own flesh, and in humility submitting to a priest's examination.

Interestingly, the examination was purely visual - the priest didn't ask about subjective feelings like itching, pain, numbness, throbbing, etc.

The emphasis on spiritual examination can be seen in the New Testament.

- **2 Corinthians 13:5** - "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

- **1 Corinthians 11:31** - "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

### **But what was considered to be Leprosy at this time?**

What we call leprosy today is Hansen's Disease. But the conditions described here are different.

Besides describing an affliction of the skin, these leprosy passages serve as powerful and detailed types of how to detect and deal with our spiritual rebellion, pride and what Paul calls living "according the flesh" rather than the Spirit.

Paul uses "flesh" (*sarx*) to mean humanity's self-seeking nature. From God's point of view, our reliance on self is unclean, loathesome and fatal - reflected in the symptoms of physical leprosy.

Romans 8:8 - "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

### **Rebellion against Authority**

In many prominent cases, leprosy was inflicted by God for rebellion against authority.

**Moses** - Questioned whether the Children of Israel would believe him. (This was actually questioning God's power) So God turns his hand leprous, the heals it again:

- **Exodus 4:6-7** - "And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand [was] leprous as snow. And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his [other] flesh"

**Miriam** - **Numbers 12:1-15** - she speaks against Moses.

- **Numbers 12:2** - "And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it."

- **Numbers 12:10** - "And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous."

**Gehazi** - lied to Naaman and Elisha in order to take valuables under false pretenses

- **2 Kings 5:27** - "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."

**King Uzziah** - tries to offer incense in the Temple although not a priest.

- **2 Chronicles 26:19** - "Uzziah, with a censer in his hand to offer incense, was enraged. But while he raged against the priests in their presence in the house of the LORD before the altar of incense, leprosy broke out on his forehead."

If we approach the descriptions of detecting and cleansing leprosy from this spiritual viewpoint, we'll have a deeper appreciation of Old and New Testament passages that use this terminology.

Consider:

- **Isaiah 1:5-6** - "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

### **Jesus Bore Our Leprosy**

The good news is that Christ bore even our spiritual leprosy on the cross.

- **Romans 8:3** - "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh"

- **Isaiah 53:4** - "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

The Hebrew words in **Isaiah 53:4**, stricken (*nagua*) and smitten (*mak'ob*) are interpreted as referring to a leprosy condition.

"The Messiah - what is his name?...The Rabbis say, 'The Leper Scholar,' as it is said, 'surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted...'" (Sanhedrin 98b)

The Latin Vulgate translation also reads: "We did esteem Him as if He were leprosy, smitten of God and afflicted."

The same word (*mak'ob*) is used in Jeremiah regarding Israel, probably referring to Leprosy:

- **Jeremiah 30:15** - "Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow (*mak'ob*) is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee."

But...

- **Jeremiah 30:17** - "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after."

- "outcast" as a leper?

Isaiah 53:1 -

The Talmud also records a supposed discourse between the great Rabbi Joshua ben Levi and the prophet Elijah. The rabbi asks "When will the Messiah come?" And "By what sign may I recognize him?" Elijah tells the rabbi to go to the gate of the city where he will find the Messiah sitting among the poor lepers. The Messiah, says the prophet, sits bandaging his leprous sores one at a time, unlike the rest of the sufferers, who bandage them all at once. Why? Because he might be needed at any time and would not want to be delayed. Elijah says he will come "Today, if you will listen to his voice." (Sanhedrin 98a)

-- See <https://www.chaim.org/leper.htm>

There will be much more on Leprosy in the next few weeks!