

More on Leprosy

A Summary of Leprosy Symptoms

The affliction can occur spontaneously (**Leviticus 13:2–17**), follow a furuncle or boil (**Leviticus 13:18–23**) or a burn on the skin (**Leviticus 13:24–28**), or develop on the head or beard (**Leviticus 13:29–45**). The first symptoms are those of a swelling, or subcutaneous nodule, a cuticular crust (*sappahat*), and whitish-red spot (*baheret*).

"The crux of the matter lay in the degree of cutaneous penetration which the disease had achieved. If it affected the epidermis or outermost layer of skin and did not produce pathological changes in the hairs, the affliction was not regarded as especially serious. As such it might consist of eczema, leukoderma, psoriasis, or some allied cutaneous disease. But if the affliction had infiltrated the dermis (corium) and had caused hairs to split or break off and lose their color, then "leprosy" was to be suspected" (- R.K. Harrison). This diagnostic principle also applied to disease affecting the scalp (**Leviticus 13:29–37**) where the affliction was spoken of as *netek* (or a "scall").

- See <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/leprosy>

There are some places, the Jewish writers say, that are not reckoned as the "skin of the flesh," or where that is not seen, and such places are excepted: the inside of the eye, of the ear, and of the nose; wrinkles in the neck, under the pap, and under the arm hole; the sole of the foot, the nail, or the head and beard (which are separately considered - **Leviticus 13:29**).

Also, the 24 tips of the fingers, limbs and other extremities, because of their curvature, can't be measured to determine whether a lentil-sized spot of leprosy is present or not.

Leprosy and Blemishes

In the Old Testament, the outward type pointed to inward truth.

"Ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish (*tamim* "perfect", "complete", not the same word), of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats. But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you; it shall be perfect to be accepted: there shall be no blemish therein" (**Leviticus 22:19-21**).

Just as a blemished animal could not be a sacrifice, a priest who was not whole could not minister, and an individual blemished by leprosy could not continue within the camp of Israel. A priest could not wear a patched or many-colored garment. It seems that there was a close correspondence between unity and purity. The priority was to be "unmixed."

Leviticus 13:45 - "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be."

The Red Heifer, from whose ashes the waters of separation came, also had to be unblemished:

- **Numbers 19:2** - "Without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke..."

Why? Because it was a spiritual picture of Christ:

"Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee" - (**Song of Sol. 4:7**)

"He offered Himself without blemish to God" (**Hebrews 9:14**)

- **Colossians 1:21-22** - "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight"

- **Ephesians 5:26,27** - "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish"

- **2 Peter 3:14** - "Beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and without blemish"

- **Acts 3:16** - "And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." regarding the man lame from birth healed by Peter.

"perfect soundness" = *holokleros* - whole, entire

Josephus uses *holokleros* to describe sacrifices which had to be entire or perfect.

Leprosy A Spiritual Type of How God sees "The Flesh"

- **Romans 7:14** - "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal (*sarkikos* - pertaining to flesh), sold under sin."

Leprosy is an outbreak on the skin - the visible part of human flesh. It reveals what the true condition of our flesh is inside, from God's point of view:

- **Isaiah 1:6** - "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."

David's rebellious son Absalom is described as the opposite of this:

- **2 Samuel 14:25** - "Now there was not a man in all Israel as handsome and highly praised as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the top of his head, he did not have a single flaw."

That's the way we usually see ourselves. Absalom's pure appearance concealed a rebellious nature. But "man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." - **1 Samuel 16:7**

Inward and Outward

Visible, outward flaws like lameness, blindness, boils or damaged testicles would disqualify priests from service. Inward blemishes in a sacrificial animal that became visible when it was cut open would disqualify it for sacrifice. Since everything about the Tabernacle and its service was to serve as a clear picture of spiritual truths, the "outward" display was important.

When Messiah came, however, He had "no beauty that we should desire him." - **Isaiah 53:2**

And He came emphasizing the inner spiritual meaning of the outward, legal Temple service, which pointed to Him as its fulfillment.

The Flesh and the "Evil Inclination"

The *yetzer hara* refers to our congenital inclination to do evil by violating the will of God. The term is drawn from the phrase "the imagination of the heart of man [is] evil" (In Hebrew: *yetzer lev-ha-adam ra*), which occurs twice in the Hebrew Bible, at **Genesis 6:5** and **8:21**.

- **Genesis 6:5** - "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

"For there is not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (**Ecclesiastes 7:20**)

Leprosy is viewed as a breaking out into the open of the inward human tendency toward evil.

It is interesting but actually irrelevant what actual diseases were being presented to the priests. The reason these intricate descriptions have been preserved for us is as a spiritual type of sin and rebellion - here in its relationship to a biblical concept of "the flesh."

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

The 613 commandments of the Law structure the ceremonial worship and the societal

organization of the nation of Israel. But they also conceal those spiritual expressions of relationship and mystical union that God was preparing to fulfill for us through the coming of Christ, as well as exposing those things that breach God's holiness and prevent that relationship - idolatry, self-seeking, pride, rebellion.

The laws about uncleanness through Leprosy are a picture of the different aspects of self-seeking - living "after the flesh" rather than in the Spirit, choosing pride and rebellion against God's care and sustenance - and the spiritual consequences of that choice.

Slander and leprosy

The Torah uses the word אָדָם (*Adam*, man, mankind) instead of the more common word יִשְׂרָאֵל (*ish*, man), to identify the leper (**Leviticus 13:2**)

Adam slandered Eve, blaming her for the sin, instead of admitting his own sin. This was *lashon hara*, the evil tongue, which the rabbis blamed for causing leprosy. Consequently, a cascade of spiritual leprosy infected every generation.

The rabbis broke down the word *mezora* (leper, one to be cleansed) as connected with *mozi shem ra*, meaning "the person guilty of slander or libel." This was mainly in reference to Miriam's slander of Moses and her resulting judgment. Among other sins which bring leprosy as retribution are "the shedding of blood, taking oaths in vain, incest, arrogance, robbery, and envy" (Ar. 16a), as well as benefiting from sacred objects (Lev. R. 17:3). Leprosy later was also associated with heresy and other sins.
- See <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/leprosy>

"The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (**James 3:6**).

Paul's Rebellion against God's Authority

Paul's "kicking against the pricks," resisting God's authority - so he is stricken with a kind of leprosy in his eyes:

- **Acts 9:18** - "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales (*lepis*): and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

"scales" = *lepis* - from *lépō* (to peel); a flake, scale. Where they got *lepra* for skin disease - "scaly"

Leprosy Covering the Whole Body

Leviticus 13:13 - "Then the priest shall consider: and, behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague: it is all turned white: he is clean."

This condition is symbolic of seeing our complete unrighteousness before God, which - through repentance - makes us spiritually clean.

"In a mystical sense so is every sinner, whether sensible of it or not, even from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, full of the wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores of sin (Isaiah 1:6). The mystical or spiritual meaning of this is, that when a man sees himself to be a sinful creature, all over covered with sin, and no part free, and disclaims all righteousness of his own to justify him before God, but wholly trusts to, and depends upon the grace of God for salvation, and the righteousness of Christ for his acceptance with God; he becomes clean through the grace of God and the blood and righteousness of Christ." - *John Gill's Commentary*

The 'Gemara' interprets this to say that if the leprosy spreads over the whole body it is merely a 'rash', and, therefore, 'clean.' Some scholars think this is referring to vitiligo, a disease that kills the pigment in the skin, continues to spread and can cover the whole body, but is otherwise harmless and not contagious.

As long as there is something about ourselves that we deem as "clean" or righteous, we will remain unclean.

- **Psalm 51:7** - "Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean. Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."

The mention of Miriam's being "leprous, as white as snow" (**Numbers 12:9-10**) might be echoed in Isaiah:

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." - **Isaiah 1:18**

The spiritual idea is that we must recognize ourselves as totally leprous, before becoming clean, and being healed.

"The son of David will not come until the whole world is converted to the belief of the heretics. Raba said: What verse [proves this]? it is all turned white: he is clean."
- Sanhedrin 97a

Heresy

It has been taught, R. Nehemiah said: In the generation of Messiah's coming impudence will increase, esteem be perverted, the vine yield its fruit, yet shall wine be dear, and the Kingdom will be converted to heresy with none to rebuke them. This supports R. Isaac, who said: The son of David will not come until the whole world is converted to the belief of the heretics. Raba said: What verse [proves this]? It is all turned white: he is clean. The footnote in the Talmud reads: Lev. XIII, 13. This refers to leprosy: a white swelling is a symptom of uncleanness; nevertheless, if the whole skin is so affected, is it declared clean. So here too; when all are heretics, it is a sign that the

world is about to be purified by the advent of Messiah.
 - Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 97a

The 11 Sins that Bring Leprosy

The Yalkut on Zechariah by Simeon Darshan
<https://buff.ly/2NuKZ6L>

- **Idolatry - Exodus 32:25** - And Moses saw the people that it was disordered (or wild). This word means nothing less than leprosy - Leviticus 13:45 - And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.

"bare" = *para* - to loosen; bare, naked. The rabbis said this meant wild, disordered hair.

- **Profanation of the sacred name** - Goliath ridiculed Israel and her God. David said "This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee" (1 Samuel 17:46)

"deliver" = *cagar* - to shut up, close up.

But it is also written of the leper: **Leviticus 13:5** - "then the priest shall shut him up"

- **Incest (or fornication) - Isaiah 3:17** - "Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts."

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

But it is also written: **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..."

- **Theft and false swearing** - Because it is said:

- **Zechariah 5:4** - "I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof."

"And what is this that destroyeth "the house with its timber and its stones"? This is the plague of Leprosy, as it is said, And he shall break down the house [and its stones and its timber]" (**Leviticus 14:45**)

- **Slander** - Thus thou findest in the case of Miriam (who slandered Moses) that she was taken with leprosy.

- **Deuteronomy 24:8-9** - "Take heed in the plague of leprosy, that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, so ye shall observe to do. Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Miriam by the way, after that ye were come forth out of Egypt."

The rabbis interpret "take heed" as "beware" (lest this happen to you as it did to Miriam)

The Sefat Emet, a Polish Hassidic Rebbe, takes the theme of wicked speech (*lashon ha-ra*) even further, indicating that the plague of *tza'ra'at* results not only from evil things one has said, but also from things one should have said, but didn't.

- **False witness** - Because Israel gave false witness against the Holy One, blessed be He, and said: "These be thy gods, O Israel..." (**Exodus 32:8**) and "And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies)"

"naked" = *para* - to loosen; bare, naked. The rabbis said this meant wild, disordered hair.

Leviticus 13:45 - And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare (*para*)"

- **A judge that perverts judgment** - Because it is said [of those who justify the wicked for reward] **Isaiah 5:24** - "Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust."

"blossom" = *parach* - bud, sprout

Leviticus 13:12 - "And if a leprosy break out (*parach*) abroad in the skin..."

- **One that enters into a province not his own** - Uzziah in **2 Chronicles 26:19**

See **Deuteronomy 19:14** - "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor's landmark"

Hillel - "In the place where there are no men, there do thou strive to be the man"

Compare Paul - **Romans 15:20** - "Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation"

- **One that sets strife between brethren** - Pharaoh took Sarah into his palace, "And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife." (**Genesis 12:17**)

"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*).

Leviticus 13:1-2 - "like the plague (*nega*) of leprosy"

- **An evil eye** - In Jewish tradition, a man with "an evil eye" will not only feel no joy but experience actual distress when others prosper, and will rejoice when others suffer. He is grudging and narrow and tight-fisted. So when a man come to him and asks, "Lend me an axe," he says "I have not got one." And the Holy One, blessed be he, smites him with Leprosy.

Leviticus 14:26 - "Then the priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest go into it to see the plague..." (Thus his selfishness is exposed when all see what he does possess).

- **Job 20:28** - "The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath."

Also, the two words are similar - "evil eye" = *tsar-ain* and leprosy = *tsaraeth*

- **A proud man** - some even say, in the case of Naaman

- **One who speaks a word against his fellow** - Moses in **Exodus 4:1** - "But they will not believe me." What answer did he receive? **Exodus 6:6** - "Put now thy hand into thy bosom."

Leprosy in a Garment

Leviticus 13:47 - "The garment also that the plague of leprosy is in..."

In the New Testament, this is called a garment "spotted by the flesh."

- **Jude 1:23** - "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

Some Important Resource Links:

<http://religiondocbox.com/Judaism/71757270-The-leper-messiah-the-gospel-of-the-suffering-servant.html>

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/purity-and-impurity-ritual>

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tzaraat-a-biblical-affliction/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tzaraath>

Negaim on Leprosy

<http://learn.conservativeyeshiva.org/topic/rabbinic-texts/mishnah/my-seder-toharot/negaim/>

Leviticus commentary

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/otherparshas_cdo/aid/9175/jewish/All-Parshas.htm