

PARASHAT METZORA

(PERSON AFFLICTED WITH SKIN DISEASES)

LEVITICUS 14:1-15:33

ETZ CHAYEEM HOO (HE IS A TREE OF LIFE)

Yeshua is a tree of life to those who take hold of Him, and those who support Him are praiseworthy. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all of His paths are shalom. Bring us back YHVH to You, and we shall come, renew our days as of old.

As we begin to study the Torah let us never forget that YESHUA THE MESSIAH is the Living Torah, the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh. He is the way, the truth and the life — the Living Manna sent from heaven. Without Him living in our lives through the indwelling Presence of his Set-apart/Kadosh Spirit (Who leads us into all truth and revelation) the Written Torah can become the dead letter of the law!

Haftorah Reading

2 Kings 7:3-20

B'rit Chadashah

Yeshua heals the woman with the issue of blood: **Matthew 9:20-26; Mark 5:24-34; Luke 8:42-48**

On evil speaking: **Ephesians 4:31; James 3:1-12; 4:11-12; 1 Peter 2:1; Romans 6:19-23**

On holiness: **Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16**

On the marriage bed: **Hebrews 13:4**

Outline of This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion):

- 14:1 The First Stage of *Metzora* (a person afflicted with a skin disorder) Purification: Identification
- 14:4 The Second Stage: The Afflicted Person Is Separated From the Camp
- 14:9 The Third Stage: Shaving Off All Hair
- 14:10 The Final Stage of Purification: An Offering Is Made
- 14:21 The Offering of the Poor *Metzora*
- 14:33 *Tzaraas* in a House
- 14:49 Purification of the House
- 15:1 Male Bodily Discharges
- 15:19 Female Bodily Discharges
- 15:25 Female: An Issue of Blood Outside the Usual Cycle

Study Questions For This Week's Midrash (Torah Discussion):

1 **14:1-57**, As noted in the previous Parashah (*Tazria*), in Jewish thought contamination brought about by skin disorders is caused by one's degraded spiritual condition; namely, one has sinned and is now suffering the consequences. When your physical health is compromised, do you first ask for wisdom from above for insights on any underlying spiritual causes for the sickness? If found, what should be done? Consider repentance and restitution?

2 In our view of YHVH, we may have difficulty seeing him afflicting his people. In fact, the Christian "health and wealth" teachers adamantly teach against this. This is not the Hebraic view, though, nor the

view substantiated by Scripture, nor by this Parashah. Torah is very clear: obey and be blessed, disobey and suffer the consequences of your actions (i.e. curses, see Deut 28). The “health and wealth” teachers have a distorted view of YHVH’s grace. They teach that blessings belong to the redeemed believer regardless of whether he obeys Torah or not simply by virtue of Yeshua’s finished work at the cross. Again, this view is not consistent with Torah nor the view of the apostolic writers. Obedience is paramount. Faith without works is dead. Whom the Father loves he chastens (Heb 12:6) in order to bring us back to him or to cause us to grow spiritually (as in the case of Job). What is your concept of grace? Now that you are saved do you believe that you have license to do anything you want and to expect the blessings no matter what? Or does grace carry with it the idea of obedience and responsibility with his blessings being conditional upon our obedience? Is salvation conditional upon anything that we can do? (NO! Except to repent and believe by faith.) Are YHVH’s rewards (both temporal and eternal blessings) conditional upon anything that we can do? YES! Yeshua discusses this in Matthew 5:19.

3 **14:3, *Plague of leprosy.*** Some of the English translations of this Scripture verse use the word *leprosy* for the skin disease described in these passages. This is a mistranslation. The rabbis teach that the skin disease described here is a supernaturally caused ailment that falls only on Israelites who are actually living in the land of Israel. This however doesn’t explain why Miriam while wandering in the wilderness outside of Israel contracted this skin disease. They teach that this is YHVH’s way of identifying the evil sins of gossip and slander (along with haughtiness, selfishness and jealousy) before this sin spreads throughout the land engulfing it like a forest fire from hell. (Read James 3:5–6!) The disease would cause the sinner’s face to resemble a red flag for all to see. They would be forced to live outside the camp until repentance along with atonement and purification rituals had occurred, all under the watchful eye of a priest. As you read this you may be wiping your brow with a sigh of relief thankful that you didn’t live in ancient Israel. Suppose you did, or suppose YHVH suddenly imposed these consequences for the sin of the evil tongue (*lashon hara*) upon the country where you live. How would it affect you, your family, what politicians and lawyers say, and how the news media reports the “news”? Is it possible for us as YHVH’s ambassadors for the spiritual nation of Israel and his eternal kingdom—as a royal priesthood and a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9)—to begin acting more righteously with our mouths *now* as if every evil word we spoke would cause our faces to light up like a neon sign?

4 **14:1–6,** The atonement and purification rituals for the sin of gossip and slander are very interesting. The rabbis teach that cedar wood was chosen because the cedar tree grows tall, imposing and wide symbolizing haughtiness. The wood used in the ritual was about the size of a baseball bat (*ArtScroll Tanach Series Vayikra*, p. 221). Hyssop may actually be thyme or oregano. Since antiquity thyme has been known for its cleansing and healing properties. It is an antibiotic and antiseptic and is beneficial against infectious diseases and for healing wounds. Oregano, on the other hand, is a strong antiseptic, antitoxic and antiviral herb.

Why do you think YHVH chose these herbs to be part of the cleansing process for the sinner who was guilty of murdering others with his tongue?

The third ingredient in the cleansing process was a crimson thread. The rabbis teach that this was wool dyed with a pigment made from a lowly creature (either an insect or a snail, *Ibid.*). Why wool and why red? How does this relate to sin? (See Isa 1:18.) The wood, “hyssop” and the crimson wool were all tied together to symbolize the fact that the offending party had fallen from a place of pride against his neighbor when he spoke evil of him, and ended up finding himself humiliated and finally ostracized from the camp leaving him feeling very lowly like a snail or insect. Together, these elements symbolized the penitent’s newfound humility (*Ibid.*).

Have you ever gossiped against or slandered someone only to be convicted by your conscience and the Spirit of Elohim? How did it feel? Did you take the next step and repent to the person you spoke evil against? How did you feel then? Like a snail?!

The last components to be used in the cleansing ceremony were two clean birds. What does this signify? Remember, as Renewed Covenant believers on which side of the cross we are now living. To whom did everything in the ancient sacrificial system point? Why was one bird killed and one allowed to fly away? Who atoned for our sins? There were two aspects of Yeshua’s ministry at the cross: his death and burial

and then his resurrection. Each one was part of our being redeemed of our sins. Discuss how the two birds picture this.

5 **14:4–32**, Read this passage of Scripture and see how many clues you can find that point to Yeshua. We'll give you hints along the way with Scriptures to look up that will give you the answers. The purpose of this exercise is to show you who all the ceremonies and rituals that were part of the sacrificial system and that all prophetically pointed to Yeshua the Messiah, who fulfilled them all. This means that if we place our trusting faith in him, we no longer have to do the laborious and involved rituals that our ancient forefathers had to do in order to atone for their sins—we simply have to repent and believe in, love, follow and obey Yeshua. Now let's look at the ritual for cleansing a *metzora* (one with a skin disease—a picture of the sinfulness of you and me) who had *tzaraas* (a skin disease caused by sinfulness).

- ☞ Verses 4–7, *two birds*: One bird is killed in a clay pot over running water. The other bird along with the cedar wood, scarlet cloth and hyssop are dipped into the clay pot containing the blood from the killed bird and the running water. The water blood mixture is then sprinkled on the diseased person (*metzora*) who is being purified, and the living bird is let loose and allowed to fly away. There is a lot going on here, but it all prophetically pointed to Yeshua's death, burial and resurrection. Before figuring this one out, perhaps it would help to understand the spiritual meaning of the wood, scarlet and hyssop, which we explain next.
- ☞ Verse 4, *cedar wood*: What was Yeshua crucified on? (Read John 19:17–18; Acts 5:30.)
- ☞ Verse 4, *scarlet*: Scarlet is the color of blood and in the Bible pictures blood, and can be a picture of sin, as well. What did Yeshua's blood do for our sins? (Read Isa 1:18; Rev 7:14.)
- ☞ Verse 4, *hyssop*: Hyssop (in reality probably thyme or oregano) represented an essential oil that was known for its healing, cleansing and disease-killing properties. How would this point to Yeshua's death on the cross? (Read Exod 12:22; Ps 51:7; John 19:29.)
- ☞ Verses 7–8, The *metzora* is sprinkled with the water and blood mixture, he bathes and his clothes are washed. What is this a picture of in the redeemed believer's life? (Read Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3–6.)
- ☞ Verses 10–32, Three yearling lambs are offered for a trespass, sin and burnt offering. How does this point to Yeshua? (Read John 1:29,36; Rev 13:8; 1 Pet 1:19.)
- ☞ Now let's take another look at verses 4–7 and the two birds to see how they point to Yeshua. The one bird being sacrificed and his blood being sprinkled as part of the cleansing process for the sinner is an obvious picture of what? But what about the bird that was let loose? What does this picture? Imagine letting a live bird loose out of your hands. What would he immediately do? Fly away, right? If the birds represent Yeshua, and the killed bird represents his death on the cross, then what does the live bird flying away represent? (Read Acts 3:15; 4:10; 1 Pet 1:3.)
- ☞ What does the blood of the bird in verse 6 represent? How does it point to Yeshua? (Read Lev 17:11; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 1 Pet 1:18–19; 1 John 1:7; Rev 7:14.)
- ☞ What does the clay pot in verse 5 represent? How does this point to Yeshua? (Read Gen 2:7; 2 Cor 4:7; 5:1.)
- ☞ What does the running or living water in verse 5 represent? (Read Eph 5:26.) Who is the Word of Elohim? (Read John 1:1–14.) Who is the sources of that living water? (Read John 4:10–14; 7:37–39.)

So now let's connect the dots to form the complete picture. We have before us a picture of a clay pot filled with living water, into which is poured blood from a sacrificed bird. Into all that is dipped hyssop, a piece of wood and some scarlet cloth. This is a perfect picture of Yeshua's death on the cross and how that death atoned for our sins. But though Yeshua died on the cross, he did not stay dead, but resurrected out of the grave three days later and returned to his Father in heaven. This is pictured by the bird that was let loose to fly away.

This was such a simple ceremony, described in a few short verses in Leviticus 14, yet when you look carefully at it, do you notice how rich in meaning it is? Thankfully, we have the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) to help us to understand the meaning of this otherwise mysterious cleansing ritual!

6 14:8–9, What is the significance of shaving the body? Rabbi S. R. Hirsch teaches that shaving the hair symbolizes the repentant sinner making a clean break from his past demeaning and animalistic behavior and changing his way of living and dealing with others via the use of his mouth. He must come up to the godly level for which he was created and use his mouth accordingly (*ArtScroll Tanach Series Vayikra*, p. 223; *The Pentateuch–Leviticus*, p. 375, by Hirsch, Judaica Press).

Verse nine specifies three areas of facial hair to be shaved. What is the significance of this? What does the hair of the head, eyebrows and beard signify? The sin of speaking evil of others involves pride or haughtiness and jealousy. How do the three areas of this facial hair (the head, eyes and mouth) contribute to gossip, slander and haughtiness? What lesson did the restored sinner learn from having his facial hair shaved? What would others think when they saw him and how would this visible stigma be impetus for him to mend his ways and learn some new habits regarding the use of his tongue?

We now have the Spirit of YHVH living inside of us to convict us whenever we sin. Do we obey the divine leadings or promptings of YHVH's Spirit? If he says to zip our mouth shut do we obey him, or do we just *have to* say something even though we know we shouldn't?

7 14:14,17, *Right ear ... thumb of the right hand ... toe of his right foot*. What is the spiritual significance of the blood being placed on the restored gossip's right ear, thumb and big toe? The same was done with anointing oil when sanctifying the priests for their service in the Tabernacle. How does this speak of the change of life and direction of the repentant sinner? What do all these steps show us about the gravity YHVH places on the sin of gossip and slander, the need to repent of it, the need to be atoned for it and the need to mend our ways in the future so that we never commit this sin again? Oil signifies what? Olive oil is very healing. How does this speak of YHVH's grace?

8 14:23, *On the eighth day*. If the number seven represents completion or perfection what does eight represent, biblically? How does this relate to the healing, restoration and a new beginning for the sinner? And what is the responsibility of those of the community of the saints toward those who fall into sin but have since repented?

9 14:33–57, What happened to people's skin because of selfishness, gossip, slander, pride and jealousy also happened to their houses. Again, the rabbis teach that this was a supernaturally induced divine judgment. Because of YHVH's grace he would gradually afflict the person in an attempt to get their attention and cause them to repent. He would first afflict their houses, then their clothes and if they did not repent, finally their bodies. Does this seem harsh of YHVH? In our modern soft-shoe view of the Messiah as proffered by many in Christendom, dealing with sin in this way is not "politically correct." Sin is too often tolerated and even pandered to. Excuses are made. The pagans and heathens are referred to now as the "unchurched." Words like *sin*, *evil*, *heathen*, *wickedness* and *repentance* are seldom mentioned from the pulpit. Who has changed? Elohim and his Word, or man? Is modern churchianity conforming to the unchanging Word of Elohim or conforming the Word of Elohim to fit man's ever changing and evolving mores? YHVH has never been soft on sin. He sent his Son to die a hideous death on a cross because of sin. Those who refuse to accept Yeshua's sin sacrifice will perish in the Lake of Fire. We experience more grace now than the ancient Israelites did, thanks to Yeshua's death on the cross, but ultimately the sinner will pay the price for unrepented of sin, like gossip, slander, haughtiness, jealousy and selfishness with his own life resulting in eternal damnation.

10 The rabbis are relentless in their belief that the diseases listed in chapter 14 are a result of the sins of slander, gossip and selfish behavior. Not only will this affect our bodies, but our homes, as well. This will cause us and our homes to need to be quarantined thus drawing community attention to a spiritual problem that exists in our lives. What a humbling process before the eyes of the community! It would be like placing a sign on one's front door, "Here lives a gossip and a selfish person!"

11 14:52, *Hyssop and with scarlet*. Notice the crimson (or scarlet) thread and hyssop? What do these symbolize? What are other Scriptures where reference to a crimson thread is made?

- 12** Chapter 15 discusses the family purity laws. This is a tough subject that spouses should discuss with each other and ask YHVH for wisdom on how to implement them. Holiness and purity is very important to YHVH in all situations. Men, at the very least, are to refrain from all physical relations with their wives during her monthly flow. Any man who has a problem with this needs to repent of selfishness, uncontrolled passions and contributing to his wife's increased chances of getting cervical cancer. YHVH takes his laws seriously and blessings or curses befall us vis-à-vis our relationship to them. Check your heart attitude here. Are you serious about obeying YHVH? Or at this point, are you content to ignore his Word and, in effect, rip pages out of Scripture arrogantly saying, "It doesn't apply to me"? Didn't the serpent say something like this to Adam and Eve at the Tree of Knowledge about the Word of Elohim?
- 13** **15:1–33**, Regarding bodily emissions, what lessons can we learn from these verses on how YHVH views us as being the temples of his Set-Apart Spirit? How are we to treat our bodies with respect and to care for them in a way that glorifies YHVH?
- 14** **15:19–24**, The laws of *niddah* apply to a women in her menstrual cycle. This is an area that many take for granted, but not YHVH in his Torah. A woman's body produces life or death depending on whether an egg has been fertilized or not during the monthly cycle. There are many spiritual ramifications to this, and YHVH does not treat this matter lightly. While her egg is passing from her body she is in a state of impurity since, in a sense, death is occurring (an unfertilized egg is passing out). It is a time of grieving and emotional turmoil for the woman. This is NOT the time for a man to approach his wife. To do so, as already noted, is strictly forbidden (Lev 18:19). Why is it important for a husband and wife to separate at this time each month? How can it benefit and enrich a marriage? Torah considers a woman to be unclean for at least seven days, even if her flow lasted only one day. So at the minimum a man is to be separated from his wife (giving her an emotional break) for at least seven days, if not longer. On the eighth day (at the minimum) or the next day after her flow has stopped, she is no longer considered unclean (*ArtScroll Tanach Series Vayikra*, p. 247). Again, what is the significance of the number eight in Scripture? How does this relate to the woman commencing a new cycle that has the possibility of producing life?

HAFTORAH READING—2 KINGS 7:3–20

Understanding the Scriptures Allegorically

This is perhaps one of the more difficult biblical stories to interpret allegorically (an allegory is “a story, poem or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one”) in a manner that produces relevance to the life of the believer. There is much speculation as to the spiritual message behind this passage, but to derive an allegorical interpretation that does not violate the basic rules of hermeneutics (the rules of logical biblical interpretation) can be difficult. Deriving explanations of enigmatic biblical passages is easily accomplished if the rules of logical interpretations are jettisoned. But trained biblical exegetes will not succumb to these tendencies no matter how great the temptation. Perhaps this is why we could find so little rabbinical and Christian commentary pertaining to the four lepers and the spiritual message it holds for future generations. It is likely that the true message is yet to be revealed for the end-time generation.

Examples of some of the questions the biblical student may want to ask in attempting to interpret the 2 Kings 7:3–20 passage could be:

- ☞ What is the significance of the skin disease mistakenly called leprosy, but which is actually a reference to the skin disease known as *tzaraas*, which, according to rabbinical understanding, is brought on a person by selfishness, greed, slander or gossip?
- ☞ Why four lepers? What is the significance of the number four? Are there other instances in Scripture where the number four is used and seems to have some logical relevance or connection to this story whereby we can gain some interpretation as to the spiritual message YHVH is trying to convey to us through it?
- ☞ What is the significance of the besiegement of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom com-

monly known as Ephraim, Samaria or the House of Israel? Many generations previously, they had split off from Judah (the Southern Kingdom) and in so doing they departed from the Torah and turned to a religious system that mixed the truths of the Bible with pagan traditions. Some Bible teachers see parallels between the ancient House of Israel/Ephraim and the early church when by the second century A.D. it had largely forsaken its Hebrew/Torah-based roots for a mongrelized religious system that mixed biblical truth with pagan customs. This mixture has been bequeathed to modern Christianity, which is why some see a comparison between the House of Israel and Christianity.

- ☞ So in this light, who might the four lepers represent? Their disease was a result of sin causing them to be ostracized from Israelite society. Are there any modern parallels to this? After all, the parent society was perhaps more sinful and idolatrous than the lepers they had thrust out. Let's not forget that Samaria was under YHVH's prophesied judgment and was at that time being besieged by Syria and was about to fall.
- ☞ Who might the Syrians represent? Often YHVH used foreign powers to discipline rebellious Israel in hopes of bringing his people back to him. If Samaria represents the modern church, then what if any are the modern parallels to this?
- ☞ The four lepers upon discovering the abandoned wealth and provision of the Syrian army initially exhibited greed and selfishness, but their consciences smote them for this. On second thought, they found the motivation within their hearts to share the good news with their starving Israelite brethren who had been reduced to cannibalism huddling in fear behind the city walls of Samaria.

There are more details that beg interpretations, but we have only listed the main points of the story for consideration.

Some commentators have suggested that Samaria represents the spiritually lost or unsaved, while the four lepers represent sinners who have left the past lifestyle of sin, and unable to go back, have pressed forward into YHVH's miraculous provision in the person and work of Yeshua. Upon hearing the good news of the gospel message, they have initially hoarded it to themselves, but on second thought have realized the need to share the good news with those from their former life they have left behind. This interpretation, perhaps, is justified in verse nine where we read the lepers exclaiming to one another, "This day is a day of good news, and we hold our peace ...". Yet this allegorical interpretation seems to break down when trying to determine who the Syrian army that fled represents in the life of the believer.

In analyzing Bible stories in attempting to ascertain some present allegorical application, one needs to understand the concept of ante/antitype versus type. The Scriptures are full of examples where a story or short-range prophecy takes on future or long-range prophetic implications. This means that while it may have happened at some time in the past, something similar is expected to happen in the future, and the past event or prophecy gives future generations an indication how some future events will play out. Jewish scholars have been interpreting Scripture in this manner for millennia, and call it the *drash* (literally, "search," or the allegorical or homiletical). Similarly, Christian teachers have been using Bible stories such as David slaying Goliath, Daniel in the lion's den, the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, etc. for generations to teach moral lessons. In fact, one of the definitions of *allegory* is "the means by which present generations take past truths and make them applicable to present audiences thereby keeping the Bible constantly alive, fresh and relative." This is a totally acceptable mode of scriptural interpretation as long as the basic rules of common sense logic and biblical hermeneutics are not violated resulting in one making Scripture say something it is not.

So when comparing antitypes with types, one must keep things copacetic. Context must be maintained and likes must be matched up as closely as possible. Seldom do antitype and type match up perfectly, but there must be more similarities than not. For example, in the life and personage of Joseph, both Christian and Jewish commentators see a proto/antitype of the Suffering Servant Messiah (or Messiah Son of Joseph) talked about in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. Likewise, in the personage of David, many see the antitype of Messiah the Conquering King (or Messiah Son of David) that Ezekiel and Zechariah prophesy about (Ezek 37:24-25; Zech 14).

Conversely, we see several antitypical Antichrist or Antimesiah figures in the Hebrew Scriptures and intertestamental writings, which would seem to point to the Antimesiah or Man of Sin figure about which several of the apostolic writers prophesy. Pharaoh, Haman, Antiochus IV Epihanes, and later the Roman general Titus would be examples of this.

Some excellent examples of apostolic writers using antetypes and types to teach allegorically would be the following:

- ☞ Matthew 2:14–15 gives an allegorical or *drash* understanding of Hosea 11:1. In Hosea, the *pashat* (or plain, literal) meaning of *son* is referring to Israel. However, Matthew 2:14–15 allegorically likens Messiah to Israel.
- ☞ Romans 5:14 (14–21, for context) gives an allegorical understanding of Genesis 3:1–24 comparing Adam to Messiah.
- ☞ “Puffed up” in 1 Corinthians 4:6 implies an allegorical understanding of unleavened bread (See Exod 12).
- ☞ Galatians 4:24 (21–31, for context) gives an allegorical understanding of Genesis 16–22 comparing Sarah and Isaac with the Torah and comparing Hagar and Ishmael with the *under the law* heresy.
- ☞ Colossians 2:16–17 indicates an allegorical level meaning to the biblical festivals.
- ☞ Hebrews 8:5 gives an allegorical understanding comparing the Levitical priesthood with the priesthood of Messiah.
- ☞ Hebrews 9:9,24 gives an allegory on the Tabernacle comparing the Tabernacle with the heavenly Holy of Holies.
- ☞ In Romans 9:7, Paul takes “seed” to mean the biological children of Isaac, Abraham’s son (the *pashat* interpretation). In Galatians 3:16, he allegorically applies “seed” to Yeshua; In Romans 4:13, Paul uses “seed” to refer to Abraham’s physical seed, and in verse 16 his spiritual seed.
- ☞ Hebrews 10:1 gives an allegorical understanding comparing elements of the Torah with the death of Messiah.
- ☞ Hebrews 11:19 gives an allegorical understanding of the events of Genesis 22:1f.
- ☞ First Peter 3:20–21 gives an allegorical understanding of the events in Genesis 6–9.

So now that you are armed with some guidelines for interpreting our Haftarah passage about the four lepers, perhaps YHVH’s Spirit will lead you into some deeper levels of allegorical or end-time prophetic understanding.

