

Parashat Tazria-Metzora: Sickness, Isolation, and Moving Forward
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Leviticus 13: Part I-Diagnosis and Separation:

13:1 The Eternal spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

2 When a person has on the skin of one's body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a leprous disease on the skin of one's body, the person shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. **3** The priest shall examine the disease on the skin of their body, and if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of their body, it is a leprous disease; after the priest has examined the person, he shall pronounce him ritually unclean. **4** But if the spot is white in the skin of his body, and appears no deeper than the skin, and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall confine the diseased person for seven days. **5** The priest shall examine them on the seventh day, and if he sees that the disease is checked and the disease has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall confine them seven days more. **6** The priest shall examine the person again on the seventh day, and if the disease has abated and the disease has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only an eruption; and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean...

9 When a person contracts a leprous disease, the person shall be brought to the priest. **10** The priest shall make an examination, and if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white, and there is quick raw flesh in the swelling, **11** it is a chronic leprous disease in the skin of the body. The priest shall pronounce the person unclean; he shall not confine the person, for the person is unclean...

45 The person who has the leprous disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of one's head be disheveled; and the person shall cover their upper lip and cry out, "Unclean, unclean." **46** The person shall remain unclean as long as one has the disease; the person is unclean. The person shall live alone; their dwelling shall be outside the camp.

Leviticus 14: Part II-Ritually Re-Entering Society:

14:1 The Eternal spoke to Moses, saying: **2** This shall be the ritual for the leprous person at the time of their cleansing:

The person shall be brought to the priest; **3** the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall make an examination. If the disease is healed in the leprous person, **4** the

priest shall command that two living clean birds and cedarwood and crimson yarn and hyssop be brought for the one who is to be cleansed. **5** The priest shall command that one of the birds be slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel. **6** He shall take the living bird with the cedarwood and the crimson yarn and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. **7** He shall sprinkle it seven times upon the one who is to be cleansed of the leprous disease; then he shall pronounce the person clean, and he shall let the living bird go into the open field. **8** The one who is to be cleansed shall wash their clothes, and shave off all their hair, and bathe themselves in water, and the person shall be clean. After that the person shall come into the camp, but shall live outside their tent seven days.

9 On the seventh day the person shall shave all their hair: of head, beard, eyebrows; the person shall shave all their hair. Then the person shall wash their clothes, and bathe their body in water, and the person shall be clean. **10** On the eighth day the person shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish, and a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, and one log of oil. **11** The priest who cleanses shall set the person to be cleansed, along with these things, before the Eternal, at the entrance of the tent of meeting..

20 Thus the priest shall make atonement on their behalf and the person shall be clean.

21 But if the person is poor and cannot afford so much, the person shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering to be elevated, to make atonement on their behalf..**22** also two turtledoves or two pigeons, such as the person can afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. **23** On the eighth day the person shall bring them for their cleansing to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, before the Eternal.

The "Sin" of Sickness:

Who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth from the womb; when I made clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, and said: "Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed"? (Job 38: 8-11, quoted in Mary Douglas, Leviticus as Literature, pg. 176)