

Shiur L'Yom Shenit¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Metzora:*** **Leviticus 14:1-32**
 Haftarah: **II Kings 7:3-9**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Romans 6:19-21**

***Through these protocols, the kohen will tahar the person
before the Face of the Holy One.***

[Leviticus 14:29 & 31]

Today's Meditation is Iyov [Job] 3:1-13;

The Amidah prayer Focus for This Week is Petition No. 3, *S'lach* [Forgiveness]

Zot tihyeh torat ha-metzora b'yom tahorato – these are the protocols for the day the metzora becomes tahor **Leviticus 14:1-2a.**

Torah is the Creator's protocol for transforming ordinary human beings like us from a motley crew of self-centered slaves and shrews to a fitting help-meet for Himself – a Bride without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. **Psalm 119:9, 11, 97-105.** We can – and should - therefore embrace the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover protocols of *Sefer Vayikra*, as we do all the *mitzvot* of Torah, with complete confidence that they are intended for, and will invariably result in, our and the world's good. With that as a background, let's begin to examine that plan in the context of the *tumah-to-the-limit* disaster-zone the Torah calls *ha-metzora*. Through the empowerment of Torah the Holy One invites all human beings to become *people of ever-increasing beauty and purity*; all of them – yes, even the lowly *metzora*.

Understanding the 'Metzora' - and the Holy One's Unshakeable Love For and Grace Toward Him or Her

As discussed in the introductory study for this parsha, the instructions for Covenant living we find in this week's parsha will be a continuation of the *Kedusha Discourse* – i.e. the Great Download of revelation that the Holy One began to release over us in the aftermath of the shocking deaths of Nadav and Avihu. As the era in which the Holy One actually began to dwell in the midst of His Covenant People in a manifest way at the Tabernacle began in earnest, the Holy One started to reveal, one thing at a time, how His Presence among us was about to transform everything about our lives. With the Light of His Presence shining on Moshe's countenance, and with the Holy Words of the Creator of the Universe bathing us in Pure Heavenly Light, we suddenly started seeing 'spots' and 'blemishes' in ourselves where before we had seen nothing amiss. What Torah speaks about being

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in the *basar* is not just the skin. What happens in the skin is merely evidence of what is going on deeper, in the animalistic and pseudo-intelligent part of us that operates contrary to the Spirit of the Holy One. This includes the ‘flesh’ man’s will, mindsets, attitudes, priority matrix, set of values, emotions, defense mechanisms, coping mechanisms, thought patterns, speech patterns, habits, cultural assumptions, and reaction patterns. The ‘flesh’ is basically everything that connects us to the animal nature in us rather than the neshama the Holy One breathed into us.

What are all these *spots, sores, lesions, and blemishes* that are suddenly showing up in our flesh? They represent the cumulative effect on us of every insult of *tumah* we have ever received and left un-*tahored*. This includes every ingested but never expelled morsel from the *tamei* realm – whether received through the digestive system or any other of the flesh man’s ‘gate’ organs (eyes, ears, nose, taste buds, and nerve endings) – we have received. It thus includes the dark energy impact of every negative word we have either spoken or heard, and every painful, traumatic, unjust, or perverse event we have ever either participated in or witnessed. It covers every incident of murmuring, complaining, accusing, blaming, and judging – dished out or received. It includes every incident of ridicule, rejection, humiliation, or verbal, physical, or sexual assault or abuse – whether we suffered it or committed it. It involves every time we succumbed to, or put anyone else into, a position of worry, fear, anger and/or rage. It includes every experience of life where we have felt, or made someone else feel, manipulated, controlled, abandoned, unappreciated, and/or unloved; or helpless, hopeless, and/or impotent; or inferior, unloveable, and/or useless. It includes every event of abuse of or dependence upon alcohol, drugs, ‘comfort food’, or sexual admixture to ‘help us make it through the night’. It includes every rant, every argument, and every physical fight. It includes every incident of betrayal, bereavement, or broken-heartedness.

Wounds of the flesh such as these often turn into wounds of the soul. Though deeply embedded in our past, they can be triggered by any other *tumah* insult we experience in the present. Their operation drains us of energy and passion. They ultimately have an adverse affect on all our interactions and relationships with others, especially those closest to us – not to mention our own health, productivity, mood, confidence, inner peace/turmoil index, joy/depression index, thanksgiving/complaint index, and contentment/dissatisfaction index.

So – how can our *tumah*-associated ‘wounds of the soul’ be healed? They must be exposed to Divine Light. That is what is happening at Sinai. That is why we have suddenly begun seeing our spots, sores, lesions, and blemishes. But seeing them is only the first step. Such wounds can only be healed when we acknowledge their existence, take ownership of and responsibility for their continued effect on us,

stop blaming others for them and the problems they are causing, and seek out and submit to a true *kohen* [in our case, that ultimately means Messiah Yeshua; for others, it may mean us!] who we can trust not to overreact, be disgusted or repulsed, judge, look around for someone to blame, or either preach at or pontificate to us, but who will instead both create a safe place for us to heal up and lead us along a pathway that will lead to our healing and restoration. If that does not happen – if we *refuse to cooperate* with the healing protocols just described - well, that is how *tumah* gets completely out of control, and a person who could have – indeed should have – been healed and restored to wholeness and functionality, instead becomes, for a time at least, an unholy, unwholesome, toxic *metzora mess*. Ah, but Torah has good news. Being a toxic *metzora mess* is most definitely not how a person’s story has to end! With the Holy One, and the Torah, there is always hope – and indeed a confident, expectation of redemption and restoration – even for the worst *metzora mess* in the world!

Every Metzora Can Easily Be Tahor-ed and Restored!

Metzora is a Hebrew noun that is found multiple times in the original Hebrew text of the 28th parsha. The first instance in this parsha is found in Leviticus 14:2. In the Authorized King James translation this Hebrew noun was rendered as “*leper*”. This made sense to Englishmen in the early 17th Century – for a disease by that name had been a regular feature of life there since medieval times. Known today as Hansen's disease, the condition with which every English person alive in that day was familiar was a slow incubating disease caused by a bacteria. That disease often resulted in loss of fingers and toes, gangrene, blindness, collapse of the nose, ulcerations, lesions and weakening of the skeletal frame. By calling a *metzora* a leper, the translators were seeking to cause the reader to shudder in revulsion – if not fear. But is an English ‘leper’ – at least in the context with which 17th century Englishmen knew it – really the same thing as a *metzora* as described by the God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov thousands of years previously, in the Hebrew language, to Hebrew people? To really understand what a *metzora* was – not from a 17th Century English cultural worldview, but from the Holy One’s perspective, one must look at the concept through Hebraic lenses – and with Sinaitic bifocals.

Hebraically, in the context of what the Holy One was releasing on Mount Sinai, the descriptive noun *metzora* is simply the way the Holy One chose to refer to a human being who has obsessed over and immersed himself in *tumah* and has therefore *begun to ooze a toxic form of tumah called tzara’at into the environment*. As we have learned previously, *tumah* is not ‘uncleanness’ in the personal hygiene sense, and *tzara’at* is nowhere close to the contagious viral disease we Westerners

² See Tuesday’s Study from the week of parsha *Tazria* for a detailed discussion of *tzara’at*.

identify with leprosy. *Tumah* is merely the negative effect that *tamei* things, people, thoughts, speech, and behaviors bring about in a person or creature's life. And *tzara'at* is simply a form of *discipline lovingly visited by the Holy One* on persons in and associated with His redeemed community who accumulate insults of *tumah* to the point that they wind up engaging more or less continuously in *lashon ha ra* [negative, judgmental speech about others].

The sages have long taught that *tzara'at* is the natural by-product of such things as *manipulation [especially lying, exaggerating, misrepresenting for selfish ends], selfish misuse of one's capacity for sexuality, pride, and slander*. The Chasan Sofer ties each of the different types of *tzara'at* mentioned in Torah to different forms of *lashon hara*:

- 1) *Se'it* (i.e. a rising): A person speaks negatively about others in an attempt to improve his own stature;
- 2) *Sapachat* (i.e. a spreading scab): A person might join a group, organization, institution, or a philosophical, political, sociological, or ideological movement of people who speak against others, and start to speak *lashon hara* because those he or she associates with do;
- 3) *Baheret* (i.e. an indentation, or sinking spot): A person might have committed a trespass or made a false accusation against someone else, and in an attempt to exonerate himself, he rationalizes and deflects the attention away from his behavior or speech by projecting what he has done or said onto, and shifting the blame to, the other person.

Yeshua confirmed that there is a connection between one's spiritual experiences and condition and the higher levels of *tumah*, saying to scribes and Pharisees: ***it is what comes out of the mouth – this is what defiles a man***, then explaining to His talmidim: ***... those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies***. Matthew 15:11, 18-19.

The presence of active *tzara'at* in a person means that person is acutely spewing *tumah* out of his or her flesh like a volcano. From indulging a persistently bad attitude, to habitually releasing critical, sarcastic, demeaning speech, to engaging in a long-standing pattern of self-obsessed, shrew-like behavior, the *metzora* is a person who *has deliberately and persistently wandered so far off of the Holy One's assigned pathway of life*, and is therefore so *absorbed with death and things associated with death* [i.e. the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] that he or she is simply too toxic for association.

A *Metzora* is not someone who is ‘ill’ – at least in the sense of needing medical attention or drugs. Neither surgery, nor prescription drugs, nor herbal remedies, nor intervenous fluids will cure a *metzora*. A *metzora* is *someone who has refused to humble himself or herself and become a source of blessing to the world, and is therefore temporarily under the Holy One’s tempered Hand of discipline*³. In order to help the person understand toxicity and negativity he has been dishing out, the Holy One allows him to experience that toxicity and negativity as operates in his flesh. He is one who is receiving, measure for measure, what he ‘dished out’.

But . . . *it is only words*, some say. No, dear ones. Words can encourage – or they can condemn. Words can inspire – or they can arouse doubt, fear and despair. Words can motivate – or they can paralyze. Words can edify – or they can destroy. Words can guide one to safety – or they can push one off a cliff. Words can heal - or they can pierce the heart like a javelin.

Look at the Holy One – He used words to create the Universe. But look at the Serpent – he used words to corrupt the heart of man and bring death to the world.

Never underestimate the power of your words – for the advancement of the Kingdom of Heaven, or for the expansion of the domain of darkness.

What You Sow, That Shall You Reap

The Holy One is good, and He is kind. His primary attributes, as He Himself described them, are *mercy, graciousness, longsuffering, abounding in goodness and truth, and forgiving of iniquity, transgression, and sin*. **Genesis 34:6-7**. His Thoughts and His Words are always consistent with these attributes. He is always looking for and calling forth with Empowering Words the essential good He has created – and ever sees - in everything [See **Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31**]. While He understands evil, He has neither fear of it nor repulsion against it - for He knows that evil of every kind, in every dimension and degree can always be overcome with good. He knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that He can work all things together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His Purpose [i.e. the purpose of redemption].

³ Parsha *Tazria* began with the Holy One’s instructions concerning a woman giving birth to a son. Some Jewish sources see this as an allusion to the coming of the future Redemption, which is often described using the metaphor of birth. The birth of a son, they opine, can be interpreted as a reference to the strength and permanence that will characterize the ultimate Redemption, because this Redemption will not be followed by an exile. Under this interpretation, the woman called a *tazria* in Leviticus 12 alludes to the Jewish people, who will ultimately bear fruit in the advent of the Era of Redemption, when Messiah is manifest in the world.

All the Holy One's thoughts - and hence all His Words - are therefore redemptive in nature. Even when He must, for the sake of love, use His Words for discipline or chastisement He always does so as a precursor to even greater levels of blessing.

From whence, then, come negative words? Negative words come from *unenlightened, unsurrendered minds*. Negative words come from hearts that have refused to receive and be changed by the Holy One's mercy, His graciousness, His longsuffering, His goodness, His truth, and His forgiveness of sin, iniquity and rebellion. Negative words thus testify that their speaker has rejected the Holy One's thoughts and ways and chosen instead the way of the serpent – the way of cynicism, disputation, accusation, criticism and self-righteous judgment. Negative thoughts and words testify that someone has been keeping company with the ultimate *tamei* creature – the serpent – and has embraced his *tumah*.

Unfortunately, whenever a person starts down this path, if they do not heed the Holy One's gentle admonishment that '*sin lies at your door, and its desire is for you, but you can rule over it!*' [Genesis 4:7], negative thoughts and attitudes entrench themselves in his soul. A destructive process is activated. Like weeds in a garden, any negative thoughts and attitudes one does not reject begin to reproduce. They sprout, take root and start to take over. In short order the infestation manifests in negative speech. Then come the cynical rollings of the eyes, the impatient chuckles of derision, and the disapproving frowns which accompany and reinforce negative speech. In this manner, men and women who are called to be a light to the world, a blessing to all families of the earth, and ambassadors of the Most Merciful, Gracious, Longsuffering, Kind, and Forgiving King in the Universe become ... well, they become *something else* – something malignant – something *ugly* and *destructive* and *sickening*.

Oh Beloved – every time we allow that to happen we thereby dishonor not only our neighbor [which is murder], and ourselves [which is false witness]; we also dishonor the Holy One [which is blasphemy]. When we speak or express attitudes non-verbally in a manner which is negative concerning a fellow human being, we take the road of the Serpent. What we are really spewing is the putrid flesh of the fruit with which that *tamei* creature and his minions are obsessed – *i.e.* the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the Garden of Eden, as you will recall, the Serpent spoke evil of the Holy One – impugning His motives in telling Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The poison seed the serpent spouted was received by Chava, and she made her mind a womb where that poison seed could grow and receive sustenance, and from which it could bring forth its evil fruit. The words – and negative vibrations – festered in Chava's mind, driving a

wedge of separation between herself and the Holy One, first of all, and, eventually, between herself and Adam⁴.

So it always is with negative speech. What do you think happens when you make critical comments toward another human being? What happens is that you drive a wedge – a wedge:

- [1] between *yourself and the Holy One*,
- [2] between *yourself and the person you criticize*, and
- [3] between *the person you criticize & whoever may listen to your criticism*.

Lashon ha ra is anti-social, divisive behavior in its most primal form. It isolates people from the Benevolent Creator, from their destiny, and from each other. And it also *isolates* the speaker - and everyone who embraces his or her negative words - from the person they were created to be.

Negative speech is Serpent venom – nothing more, nothing less. But do not worry – the Holy One has an anti-venom.

The Anti-Venom

If negative speech is serpent venom, *tzara'at* is the Holy One's chosen form of anti-venom. *Shaul* of Tarsus [i.e. the 'apostle Paul'] wrote to the embattled community at Corinth: *Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap*. Here is how that works in the realm of negative speech. He/she who brings about isolation through negative speech will himself/herself be isolated. Instead of testifying negatively about others he will have to testify negatively about himself - first through the nonverbal language of running *tzara'at* sores, then by living outside the camp, unkempt, and uncovered, proclaiming '*Tamei! Tamei!*', every time he/she sees someone approaching.

Is this the wrath of a vengeful God? Or is it the discipline of a loving Father, and the anti-venom of the Great Physician? In parsha *Metzora* we will begin to clearly see that it is the latter, not the former.

Starting the Reluctant Patient on the Pathway To Restoration

The Holy One does not intend for the *tzara'at* He brings to the surface as anti-venom to be a permanent condition. *Tzara'at* is intended as a cure -- not as a

⁴ Before this incident, Adam said of Chava "... *she is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh*". Genesis 2:23. Afterwards he said: "... *the woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.*" Note the difference in perspective. Consider what 'grace' Chava forfeited by receiving and heeding the Serpent's *lashon ha ra*.

disease. The Holy One's purpose is merely to spur the one afflicted – in Hebrew, the *metzora* -- to repentance, to *t'shuvah*, and to restoration. Hence parsha Metzora begins with the following words:

V'yedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor

And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying:

Zot tihyeh torat ha-Metzora

This is the torah⁵ concerning the person with tzara'at

b'yom tahorato v'huva el ha-kohen

In the day he is made tahor, and is brought before the kohen [priest].

[Leviticus 14:1-2]

The *metzora* is, as aforesaid, a person within the redeemed community stricken by the Holy One in loving discipline, with a very specific supernatural skin condition (i.e. *tzara'at*) for which he or she must seek intervention of a *kohen* [priest]. We too, when disciplined by our loving Father, must seek intervention of a priest -- the great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek who ever intercedes for us in the heavenly court of the Holy One, of which the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle] was only a shadow. The entire process about which we read in today's aliyah points to and describes the ministry of our Messiah.

The Process of Restoration

The *Metzora* download begins with the occurrence of a wonderful thing - a person with *tzara'at* is supernaturally *healed*. The Holy One wants us to know how to help the former *metzora* make the transition back to the Covenantal lifestyle. He therefore provides a detail-rich 'how to' manual to guide us – and of course the former *metzora* - through the whole joyful process. The process begins with a *meeting, outside the camp, between what have now become old and dear friends*.

But how does this meeting occur? The *metzora* cannot come to the *Mish'kan* and present himself/herself to the *kohen* there; it is clear that until the process is much farther along, the *metzora* must remain outside the camp at all times – and either wait for the *kohen* to come out and see him according to the seven-day cycles established by Torah, or he/she must rely upon some benevolent passerby to agree to go to the *Mish'kan* and ask the *kohen* to make the journey out to the *metzora's* isolated abode. Whichever way it occurs, some unselfish person from the community must act as an intermediary for the *metzora* – if necessary becoming

⁵ Verse 2 in our English versions refers to a "law" – the "*law* of the leper". In Hebrew the word translated "law" is ***torah***, *tav, vav, resh, hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #8451, pronounced *to-law'*. As you probably know, the word *torah*, understood Hebraically, does not mean "law" in the sense Westerners understand "law". It is not a dictate issued by a powerful governor enforceable by criminal penalties or civil liability. Instead, it is a *loving instruction*, or *teaching*, or *revealed wisdom*, as a father would give/impart to a son, or a master would give/impart to a beloved apprentice. It is a way of life, health, and peace.

tamei himself/herself for the *metzora*'s sake.

Note that this protocol assures that the *metzora* - he/she who consistently and repeatedly spoke evil of a fellow human being - now finds himself/herself totally dependent upon the goodness, graciousness, and unselfishness of another human being. He who himself/herself brought about division among the Holy One's people must now depend upon the willingness of another human to sacrifice on his/her behalf in order to bring about reconciliation. A necessary first step in the process of healing and restoration is thus *to give the metzora a renewed appreciation for his fellow human being which was obviously lacking previously.*

Getting word to the *kohen*, however, is just the beginning. The *kohen* who has been working with the affected person all along, and knows all about his/her *lashon ha ra* and the issues underlying it, then must agree to leave the holy environs of the *Mish'kan* and head out into the desert – and the realm where the chol and *tamei* proliferate - alone. This is a beautiful illustration of a person denying one's self in the course of serving others, and of going the extra mile, and carrying the extra burden, for someone who clearly does not deserve it. What a testimony of the Holy One's love!

V'yatza ha-kohen el-michutz l'machaneh

The priest is to go outside the camp,

V'ra'ah ha-kohen v'hineh nir'pa

And he is to examine the metzora to confirm

nega ha-tzara'at min ha-tzarua

that the touch of tzara'at is healing.

When the *kohen* reaches the remote area where the afflicted stays, meditates and recuperates, he greets his old friend with a smile. This is no ivory tower. This is no well-kept study hall or house of worship. This is the abode of uncleanness. This is the house of bondage and shame – the 'hell hole' as it were. After engaging the *metzora* in conversation, without a trace of condescension, contempt, or condemnation, the *kohen* will carefully unwrap the *metzora*'s bandages and inspect all areas of the person's body spots, sores, scales, lesions, boils, blemishes were the last time these two spoke. If after a thorough and intimate inspection of each spot, sore, scale, lesion, boil, and blemish, the *kohen* is satisfied that there is now in none of those places any *raw, irritated flesh, any expansion of scale, any abnormal growth of discolored hair*, or any other sign of acute and active *tzara'at*, imagine his broad smile! Imagine the joy with which he reports his findings to the *metzora*. Imagine the *metzora*'s great relief!

It is now time for the implementaton of the Holy One's protocols for the former

metzora to transition from his/her ‘ultra- *tamei*’ status as a *metzora* back to *tahor* status, and a return to “normal” life and relations. After the two share the ‘good news’, therefore, the *kohen* and the *metzora* become partners in the next phase of the protocol.

Setting the Stage for the Great Cathartic Play: The Process of Selection, Collection, and Preparation of the Elements

Between them they must collect all the following Divinely prescribed elements for use in the powerfully moving, three-part purification celebration ceremony called for by Torah:

1. Two *tzipporim chayot tahorot* – i.e. living birds of a *tahor* species – must be caught or purchased; ;
2. a branch of *etz erez* – i.e. cedar wood must be cut;
3. *shani tola’at* – either a vial of scarlet dye, or a linen thread dyed scarlet must be extracted or acquired; and
4. an *ezob* – or twig of hyssop must be cut; and
5. *k’li cheres* – i.e. a clay pot must be obtained;
6. *mayim chayim* – i.e. living water must be found, drawn, and vesselled;
7. *clean/new clothes for the former metzora to put on must be procured*;
8. *the best two male lambs⁶ from the metzora’s family’s flock must be set apart as korbanot kadosh l’Adonai*;
9. *one female lamb from the metzora’s family’s flock must be set apart as a korban kadosh l’Adonai*.
10. *six quarts of choice flour from the metzora’s family bins must be set apart and dedicated*; and
11. *a cup or vial of the metzora’s family’s purest olive oil must be set apart and dedicated as well*.

Of course, since the *metzora* is still in isolation, much of this work must be done for him by the *kohen*, working closely with members of the *metzora*’s family. The *kohen* must examine each element, find it acceptable or explain why it is not, and authorize or reject it. This takes time and patience, not to mention investment of significant resources. The *kohen* sacrifices his time and effort; the family sacrifices its time, effort, and assets; and it is all for one who once slandered others – most likely including the very people who are now sacrificing for him/her - with every breath.

Act I of the Joyful Purification Ceremony – the First Day Protocols

⁶ In case of poverty, one male lamb and two turtledoves or pigeons may be substituted for the two male and one female lambs, but two quarts of fine flour, plus the vial or cup of olive oil, are to be provided.

Once the elements are collected and set apart, a great three-act play begins. It all starts in the *metzora's* humble and isolated dwelling, with the *killing of one of the two birds*.

V'tzivah ha-kohen v'shachat et ha-tzipor ha-echat

The priest is to direct that one bird be slaughtered

el-kli-cheres al-mayim chayim

over living water in a clay bowl.

The death of the first bird, who gives his life that his fellow living creature might be spared, represents the termination of the *metzora's* former, diseased state. As this first bird's life is ebbing away, the kohen gets his hands and garments dirty again. He must *collect the fresh, red blood of this bird in the clay pot of living water* that has been set aside for this purpose. Into that mixture of blood and water the *kohen* then immerses *the cedar wood, the scarlet dye - or a thread dyed with it, the sprig of hyssop*, and then *the second bird*, representing the former *metzora's* new, healed and restored identity.

Et ha-tzipor ha-chayah yikach otah v'et-etz ha-erez

And the live bird he is to take, together with the piece of cedar,

v'et-shni ha-tola'at v'et ha-ezov

the crimson, and the hyssop,

v'taval otam v'et ha-tzipor ha-chayah

And he is to dip [each of the elements] along with the live bird

b'dam ha-tzipor ha-sh'chutah al ha-mayim ha-chayim

into living water mingled with the blood of the slaughtered bird.

Four times the kohen plunges his hands into the water and the blood; four times his hands emerge. Out of death emerges new life. Out of the water and the blood emerges a new creation, foursquare. *Selah!*

The Sprinkling of the Blood

The first act in the great play is just beginning, Scene two of this Act involves the *kohen* approaching the former *metzora* for a *dramatic sprinkling ceremony*.

V'hizah al ha-mi taher min ha-tzara'at sheva pe'amim

He shall then sprinkle [this mixture] on the person cleansed of tzara'at seven times

The *kohen* must dip his hands into the blood seven more times. Each time he must sprinkle/shake it from his hands onto the body of the person who once slandered everyone he or she did not like – to provide that person a blood covering like that of the four elements the kohen dipped in the blood/water mixture in the first scene.

V'tiharo v'shilach

and the person will become tahor

Free-Bird Flying – Free at Last! Free Indeed!

The next part of the protocol is *the great release ceremony*. The *kohen* takes the remaining, living bird, still dripping with its cohort's blood, out to a field. Holding it with both hands, he lifts it high into the air ... and sets it free. Off it goes, into the skies - to fly majestically, to rejoin its family, to live, and to thrive as its Creator intended.

et ha-tzipor ha-chayah al p'nei ha-sadeh

He is then to send the living bird away toward the fields.

One bird dies; one bird gets covered with the other's blood - then gets set gloriously free. It is hard not to notice the parallel between the two birds of the *metzora-tahoring* protocol – one of which dies, and the other of which goes free, with many of Torah's pictures of people and things which came in 'twos'. Think of Kayin and Hevel. Think of Avraham's two sons, Yishma'el and Yitzchak. Think of Yitzchak's two sons, Ya'akov and Esav. Think of the two images of Messiah in Hebrew tradition – Messiah ben Yosef and Messiah ben David. Think of the two goats of **Yom Kippur** [the Day of Atonement]. In each case one either dies [or is cut off from his father and considered as dead], and the other one goes free and walks in the special blessing of the Holy One. There is something significant just below the surface [or perhaps hovering somewhere above it] of all these situations.

Starting Over – With All Things New!

After the freed bird flies away, another series of symbolic 'new man arising' ceremonies are to be carried out by the person who has been healed under the *kohen's* supervision. First the person who has been healed shaves cuts off all the hair from his or her head, closely shaving every bit of hair from his or her scalp, cheeks, throat, neck, and eyebrow areas. After all the hair of the person's head and neck area is completely gone, making his or her scalp and skin is as smooth as those of one new born, it is time for him or her to completely self-immense a living water *mikveh*. When the person arises from the *mikveh*, he or she puts on the clean clothes selected for the occasion.

Clothed, and In His - or Her - Right Mind

Act I of the restoration ceremony thus ends with the person 'clothed' in pure, pristine, white linen garments, but finally 'in his – or her - 'right mind'. Wow! It has been a long, long road. At long last, the former *metzora* can re-enter the camp as any other redeemed soul. He/she need never again shrink back from human contact in shame, much less cover his or her lip and cry out 'TAMEI! TAMEI!' at everyone he/she meets. But he/she is only part way 'home'; and must stay alone for six full days in what we might call a temporary 'half-way house' tent.

V'chibes ha mitaher et-begadav

The person undergoing purification is then to immerse his clothing,

V'gilach et-kol-se'aro

And he is to shave off all his hair.

V'rachatz b'mayim v'taher

He is then to immerse in a mikvah and thus complete stage one of purification.

v'achar yavo el ha-machaneh

He may then return to the camp,

v'yashav michutz l'aholo shiv'at yamim

but he must remain outside his tent for seven days.

[Leviticus 14:8]

Part II of the Purification Ceremony – the Seventh Day Protocols

There is now a ‘lull’ or intermission of sorts in the great play. Six days of *re-entry*, *re-acclimation*, *teshuvah*, and testimony take place. On the seventh day, the second phase of the *tahor-ing* ceremony will commence. Everyone the person once mocked, slandered, bullied, ranted at, lusted over, judged unkindly, gossiped about, etc. is to be seen, humbly approached, and asked for forgiveness. At the conclusion of this process, the former *metzora* will again shave off all hair – the ‘six days growth’ - from his/her scalp, cheeks, throat, neck, and eyebrow areas. When this is done, the person will once again completely immerse himself/herself in a living water *mikveh*. The first time he/she did this it was very private, outside the camp, with just the *kohen* assigned to his restoration knowing what was going on. This time the process is repeated inside the camp, and using the same water source the other people in the camp – including those the former *metzora* once mocked, slandered, gossiped about etc. – go to immerse themselves before entering the Courts of the *Mish'kan*.

Part III of the Purification Ceremony – the Eighth Day Protocols

Then on the eighth day, the last great day of the *tahor-ing* celebration ceremony, everyone in the community is called to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. The now *tahor* former *metzora* is escorted to the brazen altar by his now intimate friend, the *kohen*. The former *metzora* brings with him/her the two male and one female lambs - or, in cases of poverty, one male lamb and two turtledoves or pigeons – and the prescribed quantities of both his finest wheat flour and his purest olive oil.

The Making of Korban Asham

One of the male lambs is then presented as a *korban asham* – to symbolize the removal of all guilt, shame, regret, angst, emotional trauma, and stigma associated with having had *tzara'at*.

The Public, and Very Hands-On Anointing of the Formerly 'Untouchable' Person With Oil

To testify of the completeness of the stigma removal, the *kohen* will take apply some of the blood of this male lamb to the former *metzora's* right ear lobe, the thumb of his or her right hand, and the big toe of his or her right foot.

Next, the *kohen* pours a liberal quantity of pure olive oil from the cup or vial into the palm of his left hand. He will then dip his right index finger into the pool of oil in his palm, and 'sprinkle' the oil on his finger in the direction of the inner sanctum, representing the Holy One Himself. The *kohen* will repeat this process until he has sprinkled oil toward the Holy Place seven times in all. Then, from the leftovers of the oil in his left palm, the *kohen* will sprinkle the same parts of the former *metzora's* body to which he previously applied the blood of the male lamb that served as his or her *asham*. The *kohen* will then smear the remainder of the oil in his left hand on the person's recently shaved head.

The Making of Korban Chata'at, Korban Olah and Korban Minchah

The final crescendo of the *tahor-ing* ceremony is then provided through the presentation of the second male lamb [or a turtledove/pigeon] as a *chata't* – i.e. an acknowledgment of and request for atonement for violations of the Torah; followed by presentation of the female lamb as an *olah* – i.e. as a testimony of the subordination of the former *metzora's will* – regarding the past, present, and future - to the Holy One's will; and the presentation of a cup of precious flour, on which has been drizzled the purest, most valuable, olive oil from the *metzora's* family's treasury – i.e. a commitment of all material things in or that will come into the possession of the former *metzora* to the Plan, purposes, and service of the Holy One for it.

Then ... well, then *newness of life* happens. Then newness of life must be walked out, day after day, situation after situation, interaction after interaction. Temptations to resort to old ways, and engage in *lashon hara*, indulge lust, greed, manipulation, anger, paranoia, and other forms of narcissism must be faced and overcome. *Tumah* must be recognized for the identity-stealing, mission-sabotaging and destiny-destroying threat that it is – not just to the person who just came out of its prison, but also for every human being alive.

Catching Reflections of Messiah In it All

While I do not dare presume to have the ‘final word’ on this, please give some consideration to the following. The Hebrew word *tzipor*, *tzade*, *peh*, *resh*, which our English Bibles translate as ‘bird’, has a numerical value [all Hebrew letters are also numbers] of 370. This is the same numerical value of the Hebrew phrase ‘*Zeh Mashiach*’ [this is Messiah].

Some ancient Hebrew sages consider parsha *Metzora* to allude to Messiah’s appearance in the world, citing the ancient midrash: “*What is Messiah’s name? The Leper of the School of Rabbi, as implied by the prophecy, "He has borne our sicknesses and endured our afflictions." Messiah will sit among the metzorim and be a metzora himself.* These sages reason that the *metzora* described in Leviticus 14 is the Messiah as he exists while Israel is in *galut* [exile]. He is not a part of the community; he is unable to fellowship with, much less deliver and/or rule over his bothers. Unbeknownst to them, he is bearing their punishment and their sin on their behalf as the one bird bears the punishment and sin of and for the other. Similarly the sages say that the other term which recurs in parsha *Metzora* over and over - *tahor* - refers to Messiah *after he reveals himself and brings about the end of galut and the promised redemption*. The sages say therefore that Messiah is called a *Metzora* (Sanhedren 98b) because his job is to purify all evil from the world and that can only be done if the evil first comes to the surface. They point out that *tzara’at* is a skin condition - consisting of impurity that has been brought to the surface.

This brings up a conundrum of sorts for the sages. How could Messiah be a *metzora* and still be able to enter the camp and assume leadership? And yet they believe that is exactly what will happen. How can this be though? Consider the Torah’s strange pronouncement that someone whose entire body was afflicted was, though afflicted with *tzara’at*, considered *tahor*. Wait a minute – when he has one or two spots or blemishes a man is a *metzora* – but when he is *completely covered with tzara* he is *tahor*. Does it make sense now? As soon as he takes all the evil world’s sin and rebellion on him, and bears the evidence of it in all areas of his flesh, so that he is so horribly disfigured by the chastisement that he is unrecognizable, he becomes *tahor*. And so Messiah did – *all for you and for me!*

The sages see the *metzora* of Leviticus 14 as symbolic of the sons of Israel in exile. Israel, they reason, has, like the *metzora*, has been *sent outside the camp to live, until the time of cleansing comes*. They see the *kohen* [priest] referenced in Leviticus 14, who ultimately declares the *metzora tahor* again, as the Holy One Himself, Who will tell us when the time for *geulah* [redemption] has come. Some Messianic believers, however, might see the *kohen* in question as Yochanan the

Immerser, a direct descendant of Aharon, who ministered in the spirit of Eliyahu, who declared Yeshua of Natzret to be *tahor*.

The sages of Israel see the two birds of the purification ceremony as two Messiahs -- Mashiach *ben Yosef* and Mashiach *ben David*, and see the three species – *etz* [wood], *erev* [wool (of crimson)], and *ezov* [hyssop] – as representing the three patriarchs, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov, respectively. Followers of Messiah might however see in the two birds of Leviticus 14 the manifestation of the *Ruach* which rested upon Yeshua after His immersion by Yochanan in the Yarden, which would both die and live [through the Resurrection], and might see in the *etz* [wood] the substance of the Roman execution stake, in the *erev* (wool) the garment of Yeshua for which the Roman soldiers cast lots [Matthew 27:35; Luke 23:34], and in the *ezov* [hyssop] the substance used by the Romans to offer Yeshua vinegar water [John 19:29].

The sages and followers of Yeshua alike see the bird set free as representing the triumphant Mashiach ben David, who will fly all over the fields of earth [see Leviticus 14:7] in order to harvest the long-lost descendants of Avraham from where they have been dispersed throughout the entire world. The eventual return of the *metzora* to the camp is thus to be equated not only with the return of Yeshua but with the resultant redemption of Israel from exile, as spoken of by the prophets of the TaNaKh as well as by Shaul of Tarsus [See Romans 11].

The Redemptive Purpose of the Holy One

Whether the picture of the two advents of Messiah is visible to you in this passage or not, one thing should be clear: *The Holy One desires for those He strikes with tzara'at to be made tahor.*⁷ The whole purpose of *nega tzara'at* [the touch of *tzara'at*] is redemptive, not punitive.

To be made *tahor* however a *metzora* must realize why he/she has been stricken - i.e. what areas of *lashon ha ra*, or evil speech, he/she has consistently engaged in which are inconsistent with his Redeemed Nature - and *must begin to look upon his fellow human beings the way the Holy One sees them*, rather than critically and negatively. And of course he/she *must make t'shuvah*.

A Gateway to Wholeness Entered By Trusting and Following

You see, dear ones, the protocols the Holy One sets out in Torah for regaining what the Covenant recognizes a *tahor* state are a mere gateway of surrender to the greater process. Some might refer to them as just a 'first step of faith'. The better

⁷ Please see Monday's Study of parsha *Tazria* for a detailed discussion of the status of *tamei*, and how it differs from a status of *tahor*.

word would be trust – and in particular the kind and level of trust that results in sh'ma responsiveness. It means trusting the Holy One enough to agree to do exactly what He says.

The kind of faith/trust that doing what Torah says will restore you to a *tahor* status is not faith/trust in the protocol; it is faith/trust in the Author of the protocol. That is because the Holy One's protocols are not designed to have any efficacy in and of themselves. They are designed merely to set a tamei person who wishes to be *tahor* again on a journey to complete wholeness of body and integration of soul.

Once a person takes the first step on that journey, the Holy One agrees, as part of His Covenant, to look upon the person as if that person has already completed the journey. After all, he is both Eternal and Omniscient. He sees the end of a thing from the beginning. He merely declares what He sees – even though we who can only see through a glass darkly think we see something else.

In other words, the protocols called for by Torah are merely the necessary first step of sweet surrender to a process of restoring wholeness that may take a lifetime. With the first step comes a commitment to follow through on all the others - and keep the heart and mind ever moving in that direction as the Shepherd leads.

Completing the protocols to be declared *tahor* is the gateway through which one re-enters the full spectrum of the Torah lifestyle. That, of course, means expending energy loving the Holy One with all heart, soul, and strength, meditating on and living out in real time His Words of Life instead of fixating on terrible things and terrible people.

The Holy One will lead you faithfully through the process, dear ones – if you let Him.

Questions For Today's Study

1. The process by which the Holy One instructs that a *Metzora* be restored to fellowship with the community after healing is specifically stated. The clear implication is that the Holy One expects those He disciplines with *tzara'at* to make *t'shuvah*, heed the discipline, and rejoin the community.

[A] List the elements/materials used by the *kohen* [priest] in the ceremony by which a person who has had *tzara'at* was restored to a *tahor* status.

[B] Where is the priest's cleansing ceremony to be performed?

[C] List, in the order they are found in Torah, the actions the priest is to perform in connection with the cleansing ceremony.

[D] Imagine you were a *Metzora* who had just completed this ceremony.

Write a letter to an imaginary friend [who you had not seen for several days because you were in the isolation of the *tamei* on “high spiritual alert”] describing what you have been through, and what it meant to you to hear the *kohen* say “*Atah tahor*” [You are *tahor*!] Describe also what you will do next [Leviticus 14:8-14] before you will be able to see your friend again.

2. After the *kohen* [priest] concludes his ceremony for the *metzora*, the Holy One assigned the *metzora* certain responsibilities. If and when the *Metzora* demonstrated his submission to the Holy One by performing these *mitzvot*, the *kohen* was to complete the process.

[A] List each of the former *metzora*’s responsibilities in order.

[B] What *korbanot* are to be presented by the *metzora*?

[C] What special things does the priest do with the *korban asham*⁸ [translated as “guilt offering”, literally meaning “approach to the Holy One to have guilt removed”]? With the offering of oil?

[D] Now reread Matthew 8:4 and you will understand what Yeshua was telling “His” healed *metzora* to do. What does this tell you about Yeshua’s attitude toward the Torah?

3. In another part of today’s lengthy aliyah we see that our Covenant Partner in Heaven has made special provisions for persons who are poor, so that the poor as well as the well off may experience the joy of being declared *tahor* from *tzara’at*.

*If he is poor, and can't afford so much,
then he shall take one male lamb for a trespass offering to be waved,
to make atonement for him,
and one tenth of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil for a meal offering,
and a log of oil;
and two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to afford;
and the one shall be for a korban chata't and the other for a korban olah.*

* * *

*The Kohen is to make atonement for him
who is to be restored to a **tahor** condition before the Holy One."
This is the **torah** for him in whom is the plague of **tzara'at**,
who is not able to afford to make korbanot in order to be publicly declared tahor.*

[Leviticus 14:21-32]

[A] How did the Holy One make it “easier” on the poor to enjoy this blessing?

[B] What “members” or parts of the *metzora*’s body receive a touch of the blood of one of the lambs?

[C] As which kind of *korban* is the lamb used?

[D] After applying the blood of the lamb to the *metzora*’s body, what does

⁸ See Friday’s study from the week of parsha *Vayikra* for a detailed discussion of the *korban asham*.

the priest next apply to the *metzora*'s body?

[E] As what kind of *korbanot* are the birds used?

[F] How does verse 31 describe the effect of this procedure on the *metzora*?

[G] In Strong's look up the word translated as "atonement" in verses 29 and 31. Write the Hebrew word and its definitions.

4. Turning to the Haftarah reading for today we find four *metzorim* living 'outside the camp' in the area of Jerusalem. The timing of this event is a siege of Jerusalem by the Arameans [Syrians]. The *metzorim* see their city [which they cannot enter because they are *tamei*] besieged and consumed by famine, and feel they have nothing to lose by going over to the enemy. But the Holy One has a wonderful surprise in store for them – and for the besieged citizens of His holy city!

*Now there were four metzor'im at the entrance of the gate:
and they said one to another, "Why sit we here until we die?
If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we will die there;
and if we sit still here, we will die also.
Now therefore come, and let us fall to the host of the Aram [Syrians];
if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we will but die."
They rose up in the twilight to go to the camp of the Aram;
and when they were come to the outermost part of the camp of the Aram,
behold, there was no man there. For the Holy One had made the host of the Aram
hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host.
And they said one to another, "Behold, the king of Yisra'el has hired against us
the kings of the Hitti and the kings of the Mitzrim, to come on us."
Therefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses,
and their donkeys, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.*

[II Kings 7:3-7]

Read II Kings 6:24--7:2 to get the background for today's Haftarah aliyah. Then meditate upon and respond to following questions:

[A] In II Kings 7, what miracle had the Holy One performed with none of His people knowing about it?

[B] What does this tell you about the level of relationship of the Holy One's people with the Holy One at that time?

[C] To which of His people did the Holy One choose to reveal this miracle?

5. Also in today's haftarah the four *metzorim* about which we are reading make their approach to the camp of the Aramean [Syrian] forces besieging Samaria, which was the capital of the Northern Kingdom.

*When these lepers came to the outermost part of the camp,
they went into one tent, and ate and drink,
and carried there silver, and gold, and clothing, and went and hid it;
and they came back, and entered into another tent, and carried there also,
and went and hid it. Then they said one to another, "We aren't doing right.*

*This day is a day of good news, and we hold our shalom:
if we wait until the morning light punishment will overtake us;
now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household."*

[A] What was the first thing the four *metzor'im* did upon entering the first tent in the enemy camp?

[B] What three things did they carry off from this first tent and hide?

[C] Why did these *Metzor'im* hide things?

[D] From whom were they hiding them?

[E] What do you think stopped them in their tracks and caused them to stop hiding things?

[F] Of what "sin" were these men convicted?

[G] Whose judgment did these men fear?

[H] What did these men hope to accomplish by reporting what they had found to the royal palace?

6. In today's reading from the B'rit Chadasha Shaul is speaking to the people at Rome he hopes to visit, concerning the process by which followers of Yeshua become *k'dosh'im* [holy ones, saints]. Shaul, a Hebrew of Hebrews, likened the process of sanctification for followers of Messiah to 'the torah of the *metzora*' we read about in today's Torah aliyah. Every body part of the *metzora* affected by *tzara'at* had to be voluntarily submitted to the priest for inspection and "cleansing" to be made *tahor*. Shaul indicated that, in the same manner, every part of our body which we have used for [a] things that the Holy One has declared to be *tamei*, and [b] "wickedness", is to be voluntarily submitted to the Holy One, and surrendered to Him to use in redemptive acts [*mitzvot*] that will make us *tahor*. Remember, every time you see the word "uncleanness" in your English translations, your Hebraic mindset should kick in – and you should think "*tamei* according to the Torah".

*I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh,
for as you presented your members
as servants to uncleanness [i.e. things tamei according to the Torah]
and to wickedness upon wickedness, even so now present your members
as servants to righteousness for becoming kadosh.*⁹

[Romans 6:19]

[A] What "parts of your body" is Shaul of Tarsus saying were "*used in slavery to impurity* [i.e. things *tamei* according to the Torah] *and to ever-increasing wickedness*"?

[B] Look up the word translated "wickedness" in the NIV. [Hint: in the KJV the word is translated "*iniquity*"] Write the Greek word and its definition.

[C] On a separate piece of paper [which you will not show anyone] list each

⁹ See Monday's shiur of parsha *Vayikra* for a detailed discussion of the Hebraic concept of being *k'dosh*.

part of your body you have used in either a *tamei* or a “wicked” manner, and describe what impure or “wicked” thing(s) you have done with that part of your body. Then pray a prayer of repentance over what you wrote on the paper, receive the Holy One’s forgiveness, and destroy the paper.

[D] What is Shaul saying we are to do with those same parts of our bodies from now on?

[E] On the sheet you are using for today’s Torah assignment, list ways each such body part can be used for the purposes and in the manner Shaul directs.

7. Also in today’s B’rit Chadasha verses Shaul continues taking the former pagans of Rome who have now met Messiah on a trip down “memory lane” to the days when their lives were focused on the things their society in Rome was focused on - self-indulgence, the pursuit of physical pleasure, entertainment, athletic accomplishment, body-beautification, personal power and popularity, and the accumulation of personal wealth.

*For when you were **avadim** [bondslaves/servants] of **chet** [sin],
you were free in regard to **kal l’tzedek** [the calling to righteousness].*

*What **pr’i** [fruit] then did you have at that time?*

*Things of which you now have **bushah** [shame], for the harvest of those things is **mavet** [death].*

[Romans 6:20-21 – Rabbi’s son’s translation]

[A] What does Shaul say these Romans were “slaves” of?

[B] In Strong’s, look up the word translated as “sin”. Write the Greek word and its meanings.

[C] What were these Romans “free” of before they met Messiah?

[D] In Strong’s look up the words translated as “control” and “righteousness”. Write the Greek words and their meanings.

[E] How does this verse fit in with Yeshua’s teaching in Luke 16:13?

[F] What do you think it would mean to “despise” money, in the context Yeshua was speaking?

[G] Do you see any relationship between what Shaul and Yeshua are saying and what the four *metzorim* did in today’s haftarah? Explain.

*May you be made **tahor** from every spot and wrinkle,
And may you experience, and never forget, the joy of a **Metzora**
who has been pronounced ‘tahor’.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today's Study

Job 2:1-6

*Again it happened on the day when the sons of God came
to present themselves before the Holy One
that Ha-satan came also among them to present himself before the Holy One.*

The Holy One said to Ha-satan, "Where have you come from?"

Ha-satan answered the Holy One, and said,

"From going back and forth in the eretz, and from walking up and down in it."

The Holy One said to Ha-satan, "Have you considered my servant Iyov?

For there is none like him in the eretz,

a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil.

He still maintains his integrity, although you incited me against him,

to ruin him without cause."

Ha-satan answered the Holy One, and said, "Skin for skin.

*Yes, all that a man has will he give for his life. But put forth your hand now,
and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce you to your face."*

The Holy One said to Ha-satan, "Behold, he is in your hand.

Only spare his life."