



## Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat April 5, 2008 / II Adar 29, 5768

### Parashah #27

Torah: *Tazria* (She conceives), *Vayikra* (Leviticus) 12.1-13.59

Haftorah: *Yechezk'el* (Ezekiel) 45.16-46.18

Suggested *Messianic Writings*: Luke 7.18-35

Shalom,

This is a Torah portion that can present difficulty in a surface reading only. Vayikra 12 is a short chapter on the laws of childbirth and purification; chapter 13 is on skin diseases. The previous chapters dealt with clean and unclean animals; now we turn to clean and unclean things affecting people. One thing that can be misread and misunderstood from chapter 12 is that it is not childbirth that makes a woman ritually unclean, but rather it is the loss of blood from the childbirth, which is related to the menstrual cycle here. Throughout Torah, we are told that the life is in the blood; for example, blood is to be drained from meat before it is eaten. The loss of blood pictures death; touching death made one impure.

One thing we should point out is that there is an ever-so slight difference between the meanings of pure and clean, and impure and unclean. One remains *pure* by *avoiding the unclean*; one becomes *impure* by *coming into contact with the unclean*, thereby *causing one to become unclean*. As far as food, there is no clear understanding of *why*, from the moment of creation, ADONI designated certain animals to be clean and others to be unclean; to be sure, there are things such as health issues, but Torah does not discuss such per se. A lot later on had to do with teaching Israel to leave the ways of the surrounding pagan cultures. All that we do in the physical affects our spiritual level: you see, you watch, you do, you become.

Also, unclean and impure do not always mean sin. That is, a woman has not committed a sin by giving birth, or by having a monthly flow of blood. Translation can cause confusion sometimes, for we read in this chapter that a woman is to bring a *חַטָּאת* *khaht-taht*, normally translated a *sin* offering, in order to become *pure* again. One writer has suggested that a better understanding would be to call this a *purification* offering, which is indeed one of the meanings of *חַטָּאת* *khaht-taht*. Another thought is this: As David declared in *Tehillim* (Psalms) 51 that he was born into sin, that is, from the moment we are born, the results of the fall from the Garden are a part of our nature. Our sin nature very easily produces uncleanness. Perhaps a mother had to bring a "sin offering" because she brought this new life into the fallen world. At any rate, we do know that the prescribed measures in this chapter were followed by *Miriam v'Yosef* (Miriam/Mary and Joseph) when they presented the newborn Yeshua at the Temple.

We should probably point out here also that the distinction between clean and unclean still exists in our present-day world. *Sha'ul* (Saul/Paul) made this clear in his treatise in 2 Corinthians 6 regarding believers not being yoked together with unbelievers; righteousness and lawlessness cannot be partners. But the distinction has become a little gray regarding erroneous teachings that have been taught among believers for centuries, and have come to be taken as truth, without further investigation. When the church decided to rid herself of her Jewish roots somewhere around 325CE, she began mis-translating and mis-teaching the Scriptures. For example, in Mark 7, Yeshua did NOT declare *all* foods to be clean; He was not suddenly reversing His own rulings (is He not the same yesterday and today and always?), declaring pork and shellfish, etc, to be clean foods. Scripture must always be read in context, which means looking at it with an understanding of the Hebraic writing that surrounded it, and the Hebraic culture that surrounded it. What was happening here in Mark was a discussion on the idea that foregoing a ritual handwashing before eating did not make kosher foods unclean, nor did it thereby make unclean the person that ate the food eaten with ritually unwashed hands. Jewish culture did not consider pork and shellfish to be food, so there was no question about that. Yeshua was saying that food itself was not the issue here, but rather the heart of man was the issue. As far as Yeshua was concerned, the issue of food was settled in Torah.

In the Mark passage, quoting from *Yesha'yahu* (Isaiah), Yeshua said that worship was not real if it only consisted of lip-service and was not from the heart. Impure thoughts come at us all the time, and if we let our mind come into *contact* with them, that is, to invite them into the door of our heart, then we become unclean. In order to become clean, to become pure in ADONI's eyes, a sacrificial death is therefore required; this is a mystery we will never fully understand in this life. Indeed, this is a paradox of ADONI, that one has to come into contact with "death" through blood in order to become "pure." Thus we should see the need for all the animal sacrifices for sin before He came, which only were good for a season and which were pointing to The

Sacrifice Lamb; thus the shed blood of our Messiah Yeshua, which is good for eternity. We need the blood of Yeshua “over the doorposts of our heart” to help us prevent the unclean from entering in.

Vayikra 13 deals with the issue of צרעת *tza-ra'at*, which is *not* leprosy as we know it, nor should it have been translated that way, except that the translators could not describe it any other way. *Tza-ra'at* is basically a generic term for a variety of skin diseases that would have made a person ritually impure and unclean. The general belief among scholars now is that these diseases included Psoriasis, Favus, and Leucoderma. Psoriasis is a non-contagious flakiness of the skin; Favus is more serious, as it is a fungus that attacks hairy areas of the body, usually only the scalp, but is quite contagious. Leucoderma is a skin disease that causes the skin to lose its natural color and turn white. Many historians now believe, from a study of ancient Egyptian history and the examination of thousands of skeletons and mummies, that true Leprosy was very rare, and possibly did not even exist on a vast scale in that region until around the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE.

The general belief as taught by the Jewish Sages is that *tzara'at* was a punishment for such sins as bloodshed, false oaths, sexual immorality, pride, robbery, selfishness and forbidden speech. These behaviors are anti-social, and therefore the punishment was banishment from society, with the idea that one could become healed through repentance. That is why, when someone *was healed*, they had to present themselves to a *Kohen* (Priest). The primary sin, the Sages taught, was that of לשון הרע *lashon hara*, forbidden speech. *Lashon hara* occurs when someone is talking evil about another, or using words to destroy a person's reputation, but primarily *lashon hara* is making slanderous remarks about another. Many of the Sages regarded *lashon hara* as equal to, or even greater than, the sin of murder. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan of Radin, known as the *Chofetz Chaim*, wrote volumes on this subject alone, over 100 years ago, and his books are still available today.

It is a medical fact that anger, unforgiveness and bitterness can put the body into a stressful situation, which can then reveal itself physically through one malady or another. ADONI gave the remedy: love your neighbor, love your G-d. This is not to say that all disease is brought on in this manner, nor that all who have a disease are undergoing judgment. But even if they are, it is intended solely as a conversation between them and ADONI, and should not come under the scrutinizing accusations of anyone else! There is a fine line between discernment and judgment, and all too often the line is crossed unnecessarily and too quickly. There can be instances when one person's suffering is for no other reason than to reach the hardened heart of another, although all too often the recipient's heart becomes harder, rather than turning to the Master of life. Bitterness can put up strong walls.

The regular Haftorah reading is replaced this week by the Ezekiel reading, as this coming Shabbat is known as Shabbat *HaKhdesh*, the Month, as the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month of Nisan is Saturday at sundown, which begins the new year of the Biblical calendar. The subject of these latter chapters of Ezekiel is on the millennial Temple, and all of the sacrifices and observances of ADONI's holy days that will occur during that time. Those who believe that “Jesus set us free from the Law” (which He Himself said would disagree with, see Matthew 5) get upset and confused by these chapters, and come up with a barrel full of ways to write them off; “Well! That's Old Testament! We live under the New Testament now!” That concept is similar to building a house on shifting sand – it's going to topple over. It follows then that Torah should be the foundation of our “house” of faith, and all the writings that follow in the Tanakh and the Messianic Writings are the walls and the roof. In our Luke 7 reading Yeshua told his critics that, “The proof of wisdom is in all the kinds of people it produces.” I would long for G-d's wisdom; I would long for G-d's foolishness, for even that is wiser than man's wisdom (1 Corinthians 1.25).

Along that same vein, man's wisdom would divide Jerusalem; G-d's wisdom invites us to:

שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַיִם – *Sha'alu shalom Yerushalayim* – Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

## B'rakhot v' todah rabbah

(Blessings & thank you very much)

### Mordekhi (Marc)

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you into heaven, will come back to you in just the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

(Acts 1.11 CJB)