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# The Examination of Tsara’at
# 13: 1-8

**The examination of tsara’at DIG: What were the three examination stages? What was the purpose of teaching the concepts of being ritually clean and ritually unclean? How did God use tsara’at as an example of the holiness for the Israelites? How can believers determine their own spiritual health? When you have been victorious in a battle with a sin-symptom, what led to your victory? What practical warnings against sin would you give others?**

**REFLECT: How do you distinguish between the kingdom of sin and death, and Kingdom of Life and Righteousness? What guides your decisions? What is your “owners manual?” In what sense is Yeshua Messiah your own personal physician (Isaiah 53:5)? Why is it that unless the heart is changed, there can be no solving the sin problem? What happens to the “good news” message of the Gospel when the “bad news” of sin defiling all it touches is left out?**

**Beginning with the previous Torah portion** (**to see link click Bc – On the Eighth Day**)**, and continuing with this one, we have been examining the concepts of being ritually clean or ritually unclean in terms of what they can teach us about two kingdoms: the kingdom of sin and death** (see **Bv – The Test of Tsara’at**), and **the Kingdom of Life and Righteousness** (see **Cg – The Test of M’tsora**). There were **seven cases of tsara’at** given in **Chapter 13**, this is **the first.**



The Torah says that only **a priest** was able to make the diagnosis. The initial problem faced by **the priest** was to determine whether **the sufferer** had acute **tzara'at** or some lesser ailment with which it might be confused, but which would heal on its own. The diagnosis consisted of **three stages**. They form something of a logical flow chart, with the response of **the priest** determining what happened next. At each step there are only two possibilities: **the person** would be either **ritually clean** or **ritually unclean** (see **Bw – Holiness and Tsara'at**).

**The first stage (13:1-4): ADONAI said to Moshe and Aaron, "When someone develops on his skin a swelling** (Hebrew: *se'et*)**, scab** (Hebrew: *saphat*) **or white, bright spot** (Hebrew: *baheret*) **which could develop into the disease tzara'at, he is to be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who are priests** at the Tabernacle**. The priest is to examine the sore on his skin; if the hair in the sore has turned white, and the sore appears to go deep into the skin, it is tzara'at, and after examining him the priest is to declare him ritually unclean.** Literally, the object of the verb is **the tsara'at**, not **the person**, but here, and in some following verses we find instances of metonymy, a literary device whereby, in this instance, **the disease** is interchangeable with **its victim**. Therefore, in referring to **tzara'at**, the text also refers to **the sufferer**. **If,** however, **the bright spot on his skin is white, but it does not appear to go deep into the skin, and its hair has not turned white, then the priest will isolate him for seven days (13:4). Rashi notes that a special house was used for this purpose.** The incident of **Miriam's** affliction of **tsara'at**, as recounted in **Numbers 12:14-15**, informs us that the place of quarantine was **outside the camp**. Here again we have an instance of metonymy. Literally the text states that the **tsara'at** was quarantined, actually meaning **the** diseased **individual**.[205]

**The priests** were, of course, reluctant to declare **a** disease **tsara'at** because of the

enormous sorrow it would bring upon **the victim**. **He** would be forced to withdraw from **his** family and from society. Thus, **the priesthood** was meticulous with the examination. No one wanted to declare a person **tsara'at**. When in doubt, **they** ruled leniently. **Every dubious case regarding tsara'at symptoms is to be regarded as ritually clean (Negaim 5:1).** However, if the symptoms still persisted, then **the sufferer** would continue to be tested.

**The second stage (13:5):** On some occasions, **tsara'at** could not be diagnosed with only one examination. If so, **on the seventh day the priest** would **examine him again, and if the sore appeared the same as before,** both in size and shape, **but had not spread on the skin, then the priest** would **isolate him for seven more days.** This allowed time to see if **the sore** grew. During this quarantine, **the sufferer** was regarded as **ritually unclean,** but not contaminating. **If there was no new spreading after seven more days, then the process of purification would begin. The procedure was rather elaborate: After being declared ritually clean, the priest required the person to bring the following items for cleansing: (1) an earthen bowl filled with spring water; (2) two birds of the same type (either doves or pigeons); (3) a stick of cedar wood; (4) a hyssop branch; (5) a scarlet thread. The priest then commanded that one of the birds be slaughtered over the earthen bowl filled with fresh spring water, with its blood mixed with the water. The living bird, the piece of stick of cedar wood, and the hyssop branch were tied together using the scarlet thread, and the entire bundle was dipped into the earthen bowl. The blood and water mixture was then sprinkled seven times on the head of the person, and the other bird was set free.**

**Next, the person would wash his clothes, shave off his beard, and bathe in a mikveh. After that, he could return to the general camp – but he could not return to his home for seven more days. On the eighth day, he would bathe again and offer several offerings: a burnt offering (**see **Ai), a grain offerings (**see **Aj), a purification offering (**see **Al), and a guilt offering (**see **Am). But the blood of the guilt offering was sprinkled on his earlobe, thumb, and foot. Only after performing this ritual would the person be declared ritually clean by the priest. His life of ritual uncleanness would be like a man who was brought back from the dead to renewed life.**[206] But if **the t'sara'ah** had **spread**, **the priest** would quarantine **him** for another **seven days**.

**The third stage (13:6-8): On the seventh day the priest** was **to examine him again, and if the sore has faded and hasn't spread on the skin, then the priest** would **declare him ritually clean – it** was **only a scab. Then the person would follow the same procedure as above, be declared ritually clean, and allowed to return to normal life and have access to the Tabernacle. But if the scab** had **spread further on the skin after he had been examined by the priest, he** would **let himself be examined by the priest yet again. The priest** would **examine him, and if he saw that the scab had spread on his skin, then the priest** would **declare him ritually unclean** and contaminating because **it** was acute **tzara'at** (see **By – The Examination of Spreading Tsara'at**).[207] **The tsara'at** had to become visibly worse for two weeks. No medication was prescribed and the only further action that would be taken was quarantine (see **Second Kings 15:5**).

**ADONAI was using tsara'at as an illustration of the kingdom of sin and death. There was to be no compromise when it came to tsara'at, and there was to be no compromise in the purity and holiness of the individual Israelite so that he would not die in a state of ritual uncleanness for defiling God's holy Tabernacle/Temple (Leviticus 15:31).**

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being a holy and pure **God**! Thank **You** for the heaven that **Yeshua** is **preparing (John 14:1-3)** for those who love and follow **Him (Romans 10:9-10)**, is a place of great **peace (John 16:33; Ephesians 1:9-14)**, wonderful **joy (Revelation 21:4)** and perfect **holiness (Revelation 21:7)**. I am so blessed that in **Your** wise **mercy and grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), You** knew that I could never be holy enough on my own to enter heaven; so **You** opened the path to heaven by transferring all **the righteousness** of **Yeshua** to me when I believed in **Him** as my **Lord (Ephesians 1:4-7, 2 Corinthians 5:21).** It was **Your** plan from the beginning for **Yeshua's blood** to cleanse those who would choose to **believe in Him (Ephesians 1:4,12-14).** In **Yeshua's** holy name and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

We, like the ancient Israelites, should not compromise our spiritual purity and holiness. We need to realize that there is a spiritual battle going on in our lives. **John** warns us: **do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, then the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world – the desires of the old nature, the desires of the eyes, and pride in our achievements and possessions – these are not from the Father, but are from this world. The world is passing away, and also its**

**lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever (First John 2:15-17).**

**The kingdom of the world** and **the kingdom of God** are inherently incompatible, mutually exclusive and opposed to one another **(First John 4:5-6, 5:4-5; John 15:19; Galatians 6:14).** True believers, therefore, will not be characterized by a habitual **love** for **the world**, nor will worldly people demonstrate a genuine affection for **the Gospel** and **its Lord (John 3:20; Acts 7:51, 13:8-10, 17:5** and **13; Romans 8:7; Colossians 1:21,** and **First Thessalonians 2:14-16).**

Clearly, there is an unmistakable line of demarcation between the things of **God** and the things of **the world**. The ongoing moral and ethical deterioration of contemporary culture makes this obvious. Even brief consideration provides a lengthy list of cultural agendas that are aggressively hostile to biblical teachings: an attack on the traditional family by feminism; an active promotion of sexual promiscuity and homosexuality (see **Ae – The Bible and Homosexual Practice**); an emphasis on materialism and hedonism by the secular media; a steady decline in standards of personal integrity and business ethics; the confusion of right and wrong by post-modern relativism; and so on . . .

To support **his** rebuke, **John** doesn't offer a long list of specifics or detailed illustrations. Instead, **he** presents **three general reasons** believers must **not love the world: because of who they are, because of what the world does, and because of where the world is going.**

**1. Because of who believers are: If anyone loves the world, then the love of the Father is not in him (First John 2:15b).** Because believers are forgiven **(Psalm 86:5, 130:3-4; Isaiah 1:18; Matthew 26:28; Luke 1:77; Ephesians 1:7** and **4:32; Colossians 1:14, 2:13-14, 3:13; First John 2:12)**, have a true knowledge of **God (Second Corinthians 2:14, 4:6; Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:9-10)**, have **the Word of God** living in them **(Psalm 119:11; Colossians 3:16)**, have overcome Satan **(James 4:7; First John 4:4)**, and have an increasingly intimate relationship with **the Father (First John 2:12-14)**, they cannot **love the world**. **Anyone** who **loves the world** demonstrates that **the love of the Father is not in him.** Like **Demas,** such a spiritual defector reveals that any previous claim to know and **love God** was nothing but a lie **(First John 2:19)**.

Nevertheless, the basic identity of believers as the children of **ADONAI** does not make us immune to **the world's** allure. Because we are still **sinners** – saved by grace – we are tempted through our remaining flesh by **the world's** behaviors and schemes **(Matthew 26:41; First Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 6:16; James 1:12-14; First Peter 5:8-9).** Whether the temptation comes from **worldly** priorities, **worldly** amusements, **worldly** riches, or **worldly** lusts, we need to resist **the world's** efforts to seduce us. **Yeshua** warned **His** listeners: **No servant can serve two masters; for he will either hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money (Luke 16:13).**

**2. Because of what the world does: For all that is in the world – the desires of the old nature, the desires of the eyes, and pride in our achievements and possessions – these are not from the Father, but are from this world (First John 2:16).** Although **it** manifests **itself** in external actions, the roots of **sin** go much deeper, embedded in the very fabric of the depraved human heart. **Sin** permeates the fallen mind, internally defiling **the sinner** in every aspect of **his** being **(Matthew 15:18-20)**. Thus, the TaNaKh likens **sin** to **a** deadly **plague (First Kings 8:38)**, **filthy garments (Zechariah 3:3-4),** or even **filthy menstrual rags (Isaiah 64:6). Sin** is so foul that **Ha'Shem hates it (Proverbs 15:9)** and **sinners loathe themselves** because of **their** inherent weakness **(Ezeki'el 6:9)**. **Sin** is so humanly incurable that **sinners** have no capacity in and of **themselves** to remedy **their sin (Romans 8:7-8; First Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1)**. Finally, **sin** is universal. **David** wrote: **They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one (Psalm 14:3; Isaiah 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10-12, 3:23,** and **5:12).**

The three-fold attack on humanity through **the flesh**, **the eyes** and **the pride in our achievements and possessions** can be most easily seen in **Genesis 3:1-7,** one of the most foundational and pivotal passages in Scripture. There **Satan** utilized the same threefold temptation to attack his target. **Adam and Eve** succumbed in **Genesis 3:6**, plunging the human race into **sin**. **When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it had a pleasing appearance and that the tree was desirable for making one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her; and he ate. The Adversary** appealed to **Eve's** desire for food (**the desires of the old nature**), **her** desire to have something attractive (**the desires of the eyes**), and

**her** desire to have **wisdom** (**the pride of life**). **Adam** accepted the same enticements without protest and ate the fruit **his wife** gave **him**, and **the Lawless One's kingdom** gained its initial foothold on earth.

It is not surprising, then, to see that **the world**, under **the Tempter's** leadership, continues to assault sinners through those same three pathways of temptation. **The Ruler of Darkness** plays on the corruptibility of the fallen human heart to achieve the maximum impact for evil and chaos in **the world**. But we are not slaves to the diabolical, corrupt **world** system **(Romans 6:5-14; James 4:7; First Peter 5:8-9; First John 4:1-6)**. Like our **Lord**, who has redeemed us, we possess the ability to successfully resist the temptations of this world **(Romans 8:1-13; James 4:7)**.

**3. Because of where the world is going: The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever (First John 2:15-17).** The third reason we are **not** to **love the world** is because **it is passing away**. The principle of **the kingdom of sin and death** is the exact opposite of the principle of **the Kingdom of Life and Righteousness**. Therefore, the living dead in the world are destined for eternal **death** in hell, but believers are destined for eternal **life** in heaven (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**). **The one who does the will of God,** who trusts and obeys Messiah, has nothing to fear concerning **the world's** process of self-destruction **(First Thessalonians 1:10** and **5:9).** It is **God's** will that people believe the Gospel, repent of their **sin**, and embrace **Yeshua Messiah** as their personal **Lord** and **Savior (Mark 1:15; John 6:29; First Timothy 2:4-6).** By doing this they will demonstrate that they **love** what **ADONAI loves** and **hate** what **He hates**. They will clearly no longer be devoted to the unbelieving **world** system and will shun **its** continuous appeal to **sin**, which comes through **the desires of the old nature, the desires of the eyes, and pride in achievements and possessions.**[208]

What is the future of disease or illness? In the present world . . . **death**. But in **ADONAI's** new creation, it will be done away with because of **Messiah's** victory over the grave. For the believer, this life of pollution and pain, of disease and **death**, will end with the glorification of the people of **God**. Because disease and **death** are incompatible with the glory of **YHVH**, nothing impure will enter **the heavenly City (Revelation 21:27)**. The same promise has not been given to the wicked **(Revelation 22:11)**.[209] There is no middle ground.