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The Examination of Spreading Tsara’at 13: 9-17

The examination of spreading tsara’at DIG: 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? Who can you help this week?

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 second.**



The descriptive word used in **Chapter 13** is **tsara’at**, which unfortunately has been translated “leprosy” in most bibles and commentaries. Since this chapter basically talks about **skin** diseases, most modern commentators are cautious about using the word “leprosy” as one of the diseases covered. **Leprosy**, however, will be examined in **Chapter 14**. **Leprosy** proper, as defined today, was known (and dreaded) in the Dispensation of Torah (see commentary on **Exodus Da – The Dispensation of Torah**) – but it was not widespread. Since this passage talks about **skin** disease clearing up, the word **tsara’at** cannot refer primarily to “leprosy” but must include all kinds of common **skin** diseases.[210]

Regarding **tsara’at**, when **a person** with an “old” ailment, or what we would call **a chronic condition**, was brought to **the priest, a different set of diagnostic criteria was applied**. **Inflamed** raw **flesh** in an infected area indicated that the old ailment never healed properly. If, however, **the inflamed flesh** was later covered by new **skin**, this indicated that **the chronic tsara’at** had healed. **When a person has tsara‘at, he is to be brought to the priest. The priest is to examine him, and if he sees that there is white swelling in the skin which has turned the hair white and inflamed flesh in the swelling, then it is chronic tsara‘at on his skin, and the priest was to declare him ritually unclean; he is not to quarantine him, because it is already clear that he is ritually unclean (13:9-11).**

This proves that the mitzvot **of quarantining people** with **tsara’at** were not intended as a safeguard against communicable disease. In our modern era, we usually assume that people with **skin** diseases are quarantined to minimize the possibility of transmitting what may be a contagious condition. If this were so, **the**

man who was **entirely covered with tsara’at** would be **quarantined**. Instead, **the Torah** says that as long as **the tsara’at** has covered **his entire body** so that all of **the flesh** had turned **white** with no **swelling**, **inflammation** or **hair turning white, he** is to be declared **ritually clean**.

This seems like a paradox. Why would **a man covered with tsara’at** be regarded as **ritually clean** whereas **a man** who had some **clean flesh** emerge be declared **ritually unclean**? If we understand **tsara’at** as simply a biological disease, then it makes no sense at all. But if we understand **tsara’at** to refer to **the spreading symptoms of the condition**, then it does make sense. **The tsara’at** could no longer spread on a man already **completely covered** with diseased **flesh**. **Since it could no longer spread**, **his** was no longer **tsara’at**, as it were. **He** still had the horrid **skin** condition, but it was no longer regarded as **tsara’at** because **it** could no longer spread. But if some **clean flesh** should emerge, then the potential of spreading had returned and the disease was again deemed **tsara’at**.

Here, we learn that tsara’at was more a condition of the symptoms than the skin disease itself. It was the spreading condition of the skin which was regarded as tsara’at and rendered a person unclean, unable to access the Tabernacle and the sacrifices it provided.[211]

After the priest’s complete examination, if he saw that the tsara‘at had broken out all over the person’s skin, so that, as far as the priest could see, the person’s body was entirely covered with tsara’at sores from his head to his feet, then he was to pronounce him ritually clean. It had all turned white with no **swelling**, **inflammation** or **hair turning white,** so **he was ritually clean (13:12-13).** This is another example of metonymy, a literary device whereby, in this instance, **the disease** is interchangeable with **its victim**. Therefore, in referring to **tsara’at**, the text also refers to **the sufferer**.

But if one day, new, inflamed flesh reappears on him, he will be ritually unclean (13:14). Inflamed flesh, if **it** persists or recurs, is symptomatic of **chronic tsara’at**. **The priest will examine the inflamed flesh and declare him ritually unclean; the exposed flesh is chronically ritually unclean; it is tsara‘at. However, if the inflamed flesh again turns white, he is to come to the priest. The priest will examine him, and if he sees that the sores have turned white, then the priest is to declare the person with the sores ritually clean (13:15-17).**

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).

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).**

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, How wonderful it is to love such a wise and gracious **God** who redeems those who love **Him** by the sacrifice of **His** own blood **(Ephesians 1:7; Second Corinthians 5:21)**. How loving **You** are to open the eyes of those who turn to you in the TaNaKh, and now look upon **You** with love in their hearts. **But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away (Second Corinthians 3:16).** Praise and worship be to **You** for **Your** gracious gift of life to those who love **Yeshua** as their **Lord** and **Savior (Romans 10:9-10).** How wonderful that **You** are always with **Your** children. **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you," (Hebrews 13:5c).***

***You** guide, and are right there with me to help me whenever I need help. **Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Surely I will help you. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10). Your** faithfulness provides a way out of any and every temptation that comes. I can conquer the temptation by choosing to follow **You** and hold onto*

Your *mighty, invincible strength.* ***You always provide a way out when temptation comes. No temptation has taken hold of you except what is common to mankind. But God is faithful – He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can handle. But with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape, so you will be able to endure it (First Corinthians 10:13).*** *I love and worship* ***You*** *and look forward to praising* ***Your*** *great name throughout all eternity! In* ***Yeshua's*** *holy name and power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*

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.**[212]

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)**.[213] There is no middle ground.