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The Test of M'tsora

14: 1-32

Tsara'at is a general term for **skin diseases**, which could include **boils (to see link click Bz)**, **burns (Ca)**, **head sores (Cb)**, **white spots (Cc)**, **sores on bald spots (Cd)**, **stains (Cf)**, or **mildew (Ck)**. The term **m'tsora (14:2)** is translated **leprosy**, which we will explore here. **M'tsora** conjures up exaggerated images of stubby fingers, ulcerated wounds, missing legs, and distorted facial features. It is indeed cruel. Most modern English speakers think of **a leper** as a person who has what is known as "Hanson's Disease." It was the most feared disease in the ancient world, and even today it cannot be totally cured, though it can be kept in check with proper medication. Although some ninety percent of people in modern times are immune, it was much more communicable in ancient times. Although advanced **leprosy** is generally not painful, because of the nerve damage it is disfiguring, debilitating, and can be extremely repulsive. **One ancient rabbi said, "When I see lepers I throw stones at them lest they come near me." Another said, "I would not so much as eat an egg that was purchased on a street where a leper had walked."**

The disease generally begins with pain in certain areas of the body. Numbness follows. Soon the skin in those spots loses its original color. It gets thick, glossy and scaly. As the sickness progresses, the thickened spots become dirty sores and ulcers due to poor blood supply. The skin, especially around the eyes and ears, begins to bunch, with deep furrows between the swellings, so that the face of the afflicted begins to resemble that of a lion. Fingers drop off or are absorbed; toes are affected in the same way. Eyebrows and eyelashes drop out. By this time one can see the person in this pitiable condition is **a leper**. By a touch of the finger one can also feel it. One can even smell it, for **the leper** emits a very unpleasant odor. Moreover, in view of the fact that the disease-producing agent frequently attacks the larynx, **the leper's** voice acquires a grating quality. The throat becomes hoarse, and you can now not only see, feel, and smell **the leper**, but you can hear his or her raspy voice. And if you stay with **a leper** for some time, you can even imagine a peculiar taste in your mouth, probably due to the odor.²³⁸

Beginning with the previous Torah portion (see **Bc - On the Eighth Day**), **and continuing with this one, we have been examining the concepts of being ritually clean and 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** (and here **The Test of M'tsora**). It is now time that we offer biblical proof for this **Second Kingdom** and explain **it** in greater detail.

The Kingdom of Life and Righteousness: Fortunately **Romans 5:12-21** describes another kingdom. Whereas **Adam** is the first person in **the kingdom of sin and death**, **Messiah Yeshua**, according to **Romans Chapter 5**, is the head of **the Second Kingdom**. In fact, in **First Corinthians 15:45**, **Yeshua** is called **the last Adam**. Here, in **Romans 5**, **Paul** declares that the first **Adam** was a type of **Messiah**. Thus, **Yeshua** and **Adam** were meant to be compared with each other. Just as **Adam** was the key person who brought in **the kingdom of sin and death** to planet earth, so **the last Adam, Yeshua** would bring in **the Kingdom of Life and Righteousness** to all who would be in **Him**. This **Second Kingdom** also has an important sequence of characteristics as did **the first kingdom**. This **Second Kingdom** can be described like this: All who are in **Messiah's grace**, and **righteous justification**, have **eternal life**.

Grace: **Adam** passed **sin** on to all who were in **Him** - all mankind. But **the Second Adam** passed on **His grace** to all who are in **Him** - all who put their trust in **Him**. **Grace** can be defined as "**God** giving **sinner**s what they don't deserve." We all deserve condemnation, but **ADONAI** acted out of **grace** toward us. It could have been no other way. We all truly deserve to die. We owe our very life solely to **the One** who, for reasons of **His** own, decided to hand us **grace**. The **grace** of **YHVH** takes many forms. First, was **the grace** where we received **the gift** of being delivered from the penalty, the punishment, the power, and ultimately the presence of **sin**. Accordingly, the Bible declares: **For by grace you are saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9)**.

God also showed **His grace** upon us by providing us with **a written record** of who **He** is, how we relate to **Him**, and how we can relate to others. In **the written Word of God**, whose foundation is the Torah, we have the plan where all of the separations which **sin** has caused can be mended. Is it any wonder, then, that **Deuteronomy 32:47** declares concerning the Torah: **For it is not an idle word for you; it is your life**.

Righteous justification: In **Adam**, condemnation arose from man's **sin**. But **in Messiah**, because of **His face**, all who are **in Him** are **justified**, acquitted of their **sin (Romans 5:16)**! In both the Hebrew and Greek, the words **justify** and **righteous** share the same roots respectively. To be **righteous** is to be legally declared by **ADONAI** that **sin** is pardoned and **the sinner** is acquitted. By **God's grace a sinner** can be declared **righteous**.

However, this declaration is not merely divine paperwork! In order for **God** to declare **a sinner righteous He justly** needs to change **the sinner** from being **a sinner** into **a righteous** person. This is the thrust of **Romans 5:19**. In **Adam's kingdom, the kingdom of sin and death, verse 19** says that all **in Adam were made**, or constituted as **"sinners."** That was **their** basic spiritual identity. However, the inhabitants of **Messiah's Kingdom** are constituted **"righteous,"** according to **verse 19**. This is the basic identity of all who trust **in Messiah**. We are no longer **sinners**, but **saints: "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours (First Corinthians 1:2).**

Eternal life: Finally, **in Adam, death ruled through one man**. But **how much more will those receiving the overflowing grace, that is, the gift of being considered righteous, rule in life through one man in Yeshua Messiah (Romans 5:17)**! **Yeshua's** work constitutes a complete reversal to the work which **sin** attempted to accomplish. The ultimate end of **sin is death** - death on several levels. The ultimate end of **Messiah's** atonement is **life - life** on all levels. Everyone in **the kingdom of sin and death**, ultimately must endure an eternal death, or separation from their **Creator, ADONAI**. But those who are **in Messiah** have **eternal life** according to **Romans 5:21**. Moreover, even though most in this **kingdom** will experience physical **death**, nevertheless, there will be a glorious resurrection where they will be given a wonderful new kind of body - one suitable for **eternal life** in **the glorious kingdom of righteousness and life (First Corinthians 15).**



No middle ground: Romans 5:12-21, therefore, provides us with a very clear description of **the two kingdoms** about which I have been hinting. It tells us that these are the only **two spiritual kingdoms** that exist. A person is either in one or the other. He either has **life** or he does not have **life**. He is either **justified** or he is **condemned** for his **sins**. Moreover, he is either **a sinner** or **a justified righteous one**. There is no middle ground (see the commentary on [Romans Bn - The Contrast to Adam](#)). To be sure, there may be times when a person from **the kingdom of sin and death** may appear to demonstrate some of the characteristics of **Messiah's Kingdom**. And there may be moments when one from **the Kingdom of Life and Righteousness** may demonstrate characteristics of **the other kingdom**. But, in reality, those are just momentary occurrences. They do not make the person part of either **kingdom**. A person is born into **the first kingdom** (see [Romans Az - The Need for Justification](#)); a person is **born again** into **Messiah's Kingdom** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Bv - Jesus Teaches Nicodemus](#)). When he enters into it, he is a completely new and different person from the inside out (see the commentary on [Second Corinthians Bd - A New Creation](#)). He is now a personal property of **the King of kings, Who** has chosen him to be there **before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-4)**.

For the Israelites then: Given the critical importance of making a distinction between **the two kingdoms** - and there are only **two kingdoms**, we can now see why **YHVH** placed these vital teaching tools in the Torah to help **His** people be

prepared for, and understand the nature of, **the two kingdoms**. And as such, they are part of **God's** progressive revelation, culminating in **Yeshua Messiah**. There is no middle ground. **This, then, is the primary reason for the ritually clean and ritually unclean distinctions** (see [Bj](#) - **The Mitzvot of Purification**), **they represent the two kingdoms.**²³⁹

For us today: People ask, "Why study **Leviticus**? What application is **the Torah** in my life?" Well, here it is! **The study of the tsara'at and m'tsora in Leviticus Chapters 13 and 14 teaches us about the two kingdoms competing for the attention of believers and unbelievers today.** For believers, **there is no condemnation for those in Messiah Yeshua (Romans 8:1).** Those in **Christ** are eternally secure (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer](#)). For unbelievers, however, **it is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God (Hebrews 10:31).** This understanding should shape the way we view evangelism. Again, there is no middle ground. There is no such thing as just being a "good" person (see the commentary on [Romans Ao - The "Good" Person](#)) as far as the eternal destiny of the lost is concerned. There is no works righteousness. Most people in the world do not understand this. We are not all called to be evangelists, but we *are* all called to evangelize. When we understand that if someone is not in **the Kingdom of Life and Righteousness**, then they are in **the kingdom of sin and death**, that should motivate us to reach out, build a relationship, nurture a friendship, earn the right to be heard, then introduce them to **Yeshua Messiah. God** will not violate their free will to choose or reject **Him**. But we must plant the seeds.