–Save This Page as a PDF–

Cleansing from Mildew in a House
14: 33-57

Cleansing from mildew in a house DIG: Why do we discuss the subject of the "two kingdoms" in this commentary? How does mildew picture the kingdom of sin and death? In what ways does sin cause separation? Why would God put an infection of tzara'at in a house?

REFLECT: Why does God discipline his children? What is the alternative to His discipline? Which would you rather have, His discipline or His judgment? Why? How does sin separate us from God? How is the restoration to fellowship a remedy for sin and its consequences?

Beginning with the previous Torah portion 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 (**to see link click Bv – The Test of Tsara'at**), and **the Kingdom of Life and Righteousness** (see **Cg – The Test of M'tsora**).

We move on, now, to the next body of content in this parashah, the procedure for **cleansing an** afflicted **house**. One of the main features of the afflicted **house** situation is to notice the many similarities between it and **the leper** (**to see link click Ch – The Initial Procedures for Cleansing Leprosy**). In both cases, **the wood**, **scarlet thread**, and **hyssop** with **the slaughtered bird** are identical. Furthermore, the shaving of a person's hair is also depicted by the scraping of the plaster from **an** afflicted **house**. In addition, in both cases, the person and **the house** were subject to a scrutinizing inspection by **the priest**. The only observable difference between the two cases was that **the house** was not sprinkled by **blood** and **oil** as was the person. Instead, **the** afflicted **house** was sprinkled by **blood** and **running water.**

What is important for us is to try to understand, if we can, the reason(s) why one's **house** would be considered **ritually unclean**, or **tsara'at**. To be sure, all **houses**, especially in the Middle East, are quite vulnerable to molds and mildew, especially

in the winter because there is a lot of moisture and no insulation. A ritually **unclean** house, according to the Torah was only such when the growth in it was determined by **the priest** to be **greenish** or **reddish**. Therefore, not all molds and growths indicated **a tsara'at** condition.

One hint about the cause of this **tsara'at** condition (see **Bw – Holiness and Tsara'at**) is found at the beginning of this section where **ADONAI said to Moshe and Aaron, "When you have entered the land of Canaan which I am giving you as a possession, and I put an infection of tzara'at in a house in the land that you possess" (14:34).** First, this tells us that **God** is the one who brought such an afflicted condition to one's **house**. Second, we are thus told that there may be certain times when **the Holy One** will, in fact, choose that option – to inflict someone's **house** and render **it ritually unclean**. Since such an affliction requires the presence and involvement of a spiritual leader, we may safely conclude that when a person's **house** was **ritually unclean**, there must have been a kind of a spiritual problem with the owner of **the house**.[252]

Restoration of a house with mildew (14:33-42): Then the owner of the house is to come and tell the priest, "It seems to me that there may be an infection in the house." The priest is to order the house emptied before he goes in to inspect the infection, so that everything in the house won't be made ritually unclean; afterwards, the priest is to enter and inspect the house. He will examine the infection; and if he sees that the infection is in the walls of the house, with greenish or reddish depressions that seem to go in deeper than the surface of the wall, he is to go out of the house to its door and seal up the house for seven days, giving **it** time to "heal" **(14:35-38).**

The priest will come again on the seventh day and examine the house; if he sees that the infection has spread over its walls, he is to order them to remove the infected stones and throw them into some unclean place outside the city. Next, he is to have the inside of the house thoroughly scraped, and the scraped-off plaster is to be discarded outside the city in an unclean place. Finally, other stones must be set in the place of the first stones and other plaster used to replaster the house (14:39-42).

Recurrence of mildew (14:43-53): If the infection returns and breaks out in the house after the stones have been removed and the house scraped and plastered; then the priest is to enter and examine it. If he sees that the

infection has spread in the house, it is a contagious tzara'at in the house; it is unclean. He must tear the house down and take its stones, timber and plaster out of the city to an unclean place. Moreover, whoever enters the house at any time while it is sealed up will be unclean until evening. Whoever lies down or eats in the house must wash his clothes. If the priest enters, examines and sees that the infection has not spread in the house since it was plastered; then he is to declare the house clean; because the infection is cured (14:43-48). Thus, theoretically, there could have been cases in **Isra'el** where a **ritually unclean person**, may not have been healed, resulted in expulsion from the camp of **Isra'el**, and meanwhile **his house** would have to be **torn down**. That, indeed, would have placed the ritually **unclean** person in a most desperate and deplorable condition. What could have happened to have caused such a scenario?

There are two possibilities why the Holy One would afflict some of his belongings. The first is when the person has entered into a ritually **unclean** state and failed to take the proper steps to be relieved of it. This would not necessarily involve **sin** on his part, but it would involve negligence. For example, one such case is where a man had accidently touched a dead animal's carcass while out in the field. This was not personal **sin**, but it did render him **ritually unclean**. He would have been in a situation where he was ineligible to participate in the worship and sacrifices of the Tabernacle. The Torah prescribes the process through which he could be declared ritually **clean** instead of ritually **unclean**. But what if he simply chose not to follow that teaching? This could have turned an unfortunate, but sinless act, into a matter of rebellion! So, **YHVH** would need to discipline a person with **tsara'at**, which, in turn, was designed to help bring the person back closer to **God**.

A second possibility for these horrible afflictions might be **sin**. **To purify** (Hebrew: from the root *chata*, meaning *to remove the sin or impurity*) **the house, he is to take two birds, cedar-wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop leaves.** The verb *chata* is almost synonymous with *kopher*, used in **verse 53**, except that in this sense *it* always involves actual physical contact with the object to be **purified**, and *it* is never used with regard to the purification of a human being.[253] This parallels such consequences found in **Matthew** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Gi – If Brother or Sister Sins, Go and Point Out Their Fault**), and **First Corinthians** (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Ba – Failure to Discipline an Immoral Brother**), where it indicates that **sin** is the ultimate reason

why a person is expelled from the holy community.[254]

There is one more important element to note here. **God's** people are disciplined by their **Heavenly Father** (see the commentary on **Hebrews Cz – God Disciplines His Children**), they are never judged, **for there is no longer any condemnation awaiting those who are in union with the Messiah Yeshua (Romans 8:1).** The most severe form of discipline is death itself. But this is not carried out because the person is eternally separated from **God** because of **sin** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**). The death penalty, when it is levied against a believer, is done so in order to protect the community against the person acting out in the flesh. The Bible says that if the actions by a believer would bring reproach to the name of **ADONAI**, the church should **hand over such a person to the Adversary for his old nature to be destroyed, so that his spirit may be saved in the Day of our Lord (First Corinthians 5:5).**

To purify **his house** once again, **the Israelite** was **to slaughter one of the birds in a clay pot over running water. He is to take the cedar-wood, the hyssop, the scarlet yarn and the live bird and dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times. He will purify the house with the blood of the bird, the running water, the live bird, the cedar-wood, the hyssop and the scarlet yarn. But he is to set the live bird free outside the city in an open field; thus will he make atonement for** (Hebrew verb: from *kopher*, meaning *to cover over* or *make propitiation for*) **the house; and it will be clean (14:49-53).** This procedure is virtually identical to the one for **the cleansing** of a **leper** (see **Ch – The Initial Procedures for Cleansing Leprosy**). The difference lies in the fact that no sacrifices are offered for **the house** since the desired goal is that **the house** be ritually **clean**, not to have communion with **ADONAI**.[255]

A summary (14:54-57): Such are the mitzvot for all kinds of tzara'at sores, for a crusted area, for tzara'at in a garment, for a house, for a swelling, for a scab and for a bright spot, to determine when it is clean and when it is unclean. This is the mitzvah concerning tsara'at. These verses are a postscript to the entire contents of **Chapters 13** and **14** in this order: **humans**, **leather** and **fabrics**, and **stone houses**.[256]



ADONAI was using mildew as an illustration of the kingdom of sin and death. There was to be no compromise when it came to mildew, and there was to be no compromise in the purity and holiness of the individual Israelite so that they would not die in a state of ritual uncleanness for defiling God's holy Tabernacle/Temple (Leviticus 15:31). Believers share with **the** ancient **Israelites** the view that someday all defilement will be removed from this world by God's final act of redemption and restoration. It is common sense for people today to protect their property from spreading mildew and other forms of deterioration – so the text is practical on that level. But believers also acknowledge that all such defilement and contamination is the evidence and trappings of **the kingdom of sin and death** in the world. Such **uncleanness** makes us conscious of separation from **God** – how we respond to it shows how we view **God**. There need be no ritual dedication in our experience of renovation of our homes – although some do this as a means of dedication; but it is a perfectly good idea for believers to use all such occasions to give public testimony to the profound truths of the word of **God**, especially to the hope of glory where nothing **unclean** will exist.

Since **tsara'ah** and **m'tsora** and **their** treatment were regarded as symbolic (or at least analogous) of **the kingdom of sin and death** and its consequences, the passage can also be used to teach us how **sin** separates us from **YHVH**. Such corruption falls short of the glory of **God**, a glory revealed in and through creation. Restoration to fellowship in the presence of **ADONAI** therefore required the remedy for **sin** and its consequences. Thus, **Yeshua** often connected healing with

forgiveness **(Matthew 9:2-5). He** demonstrated **His** authority by showing that if **He** could cure the effect of **sin** – disease – **He** was fully able to cure the cause – **sin**. Complete healing of body and soul must come before complete restoration of the fallen **sinner**. And all of that was provided in the sacrifice of **the Son of God**.[257]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that when **You cleanse** from sin, those who **love You** from **sin**, it is not a mere outward washing, but an inner change that allows **Your Holy Spirit** to live within believers. **However, you are not in the flesh but in the Ruach – if indeed the Ruach Elohim dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Ruach of Messiah, he does not belong to Him. But if Messiah is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the Spirit is alive because of righteousness (Romans 8:9-10).***

*Praise **You** also for **Your** great wisdom that does not look merely on the outward action of a person **But ADONAI said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or his stature, because I have already refused him. For He does not see a man as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but ADONAI looks into the heart" (First Samuel 16:7). You** see the secrets of **the heart (Revelation 2:23)**. Even if a person may look good to others, **You** judge by their **heart**, by seeing who they l**ove** most – themselves or if they truly **love You** and want **You** to be honored in all they do, say, and think. **Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord!" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, and drive out demons in Your name, and perform many miracles in Your name?" Then I will declare to them, "I never knew you. Get away from Me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matthew 7:21-23)!** Praise **You** for being so loving and holy and that the foundation of **Your** Kingdom and **throne** is **justice** and **righteousness**. **Lovingkindness and truth go before You (Psalms 89:14).** Loving **You** dear **Father**. In **Yeshua's** Holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*