

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
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CHAPTER 12

After the previous chapter's discussion of how food entering our bodies can make us ritually impure, the Torah now discusses how that which comes out of our bodies can do the same.

Perhaps no concept in the Torah is less accessible to the modern reader than the notion of *tum·ah*, generally translated "uncleanness" (although it has no connection to one's physical sanitary condition) or "ritual impurity." One contracts *tum·ah* through contact with a dead body, by being afflicted with *tzara·at* ("leprosy," although not the disease known by that name today), or by contact with a bodily emission that touches on the generation of life, such as menstrual blood, semen, or a flow from the reproductive organs. A woman who has just given birth is likewise considered ritually impure. *Tum·ah* bars one from approaching God's sanctuary; *tzara·at* isolates one from human contact.

Tum·ah has unmistakable negative connotations. It is defined by what one may not do, and the Torah tells us how to be relieved of it. It need not, however, imply wrongdoing on the part of the affected person. (Admittedly, as some commentators have noted, the Torah itself provides a basis for that interpretation, when it calls for a purification offering to be part of its prescribed process of reintegration.) *Tum·ah* seems to be the result of coming in contact with an awesomely potent force that disqualifies one from approaching the sanctuary.

Proof that *tum·ah* is not a totally negative condition can be found not only in its association with such religiously affirmed activities as childbirth and caring for the dead but also from the rabbinic rule that scrolls of the biblical books convey *tum·ah* to those who touch them. (This finds its extension in the efforts we make today to avoid touching the Torah scroll with our bare hands, using a pointer when we read from it and a mantle when taking it from the Ark and returning it.)

It has been suggested that these categories of ritual impurity were a response to the anx-

iety triggered by death, serious illness, and the "leaking" of life-generating fluids from the body. It has been noted further that natural flows require less purification than unnatural flows, which might indicate the presence of disease.

Although *tum·ah* bars a woman from the sanctuary, we need not see that condition as negative and certainly not as punishment. There is no reason to believe that God ordained menstruation or childbirth as punishment. We might postulate that there are two types of holiness in life, two ways of encountering the divine. There is a natural holiness found in the miracles of pregnancy, birth, and recovery from illness. And there is a stipulated holiness—the arbitrary designation of certain times, places, and activities as sacred. One meets God in the experiences of birth and death, sickness and health. But they are not everyday occurrences. The person who yearns for contact with God on a regular basis must rely on sanctuaries, worship services, and prescribed rituals, all of which are holy only because we have chosen to designate them as holy. Israelite society may have seen the two types of holiness as being mutually exclusive, so that it would not be appropriate for the woman or man who had encountered the vital holiness of childbirth, menstruation, or contact with a dead body to seek the designated holiness of the sanctuary. A woman who had just given birth might feel the presence of God so strongly in that experience that she would feel no need to go to the sanctuary to find God (although we might be more comfortable with that decision being left to the new mother rather than being written into law).

We can see the notion of *tum·ah*, then, as growing out of a sense of reverence for the miraculous nature of birth, the awesome power of death, and the mysteries of illness and recuperation. That this reverence would later be contaminated by superstitious fears related to menstrual blood and contact with the dead need not detract from our efforts to understand and appreciate these chapters of biblical law.

²Speak to the Israelite people thus: When a woman at childbirth bears a male, she shall be impure seven days; she shall be impure as at the time of her menstrual infirmity.—³On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.—⁴She shall remain in a state of blood purification for thirty-three days: she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until her period of purification is completed. ⁵If she bears a female, she shall be impure two weeks as during her menstruation, and she shall remain in a state of blood purification for sixty-six days.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִשָּׁה כִּי תִזְרִיעַ וְיָלְדָה זָכָר וְטָמְאָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כִּימֵי נִדַת דְּוֹתָהּ תִּטְמָא: ³ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בָּשָׂר עָרְלָתוֹ: ⁴ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם וּשְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים תֵּשֵׁב בְּדָמֶי טְהָרָה בְּכָל־קֹדֶשׁ לֹא־תִגָּע וְאֶל־הַמִּקְדָּשׁ לֹא תֵבֵא עַד־מָלֵאת יְמֵי טְהָרָה: ⁵ וְאִם־נִקְבָּה תֵּלֵד וְטָמְאָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כִּנְדָתָהּ וּשְׁשִׁים יוֹם וְשֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תֵּשֵׁב עַל־דָּמֶי טְהָרָה:

REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE NEW MOTHER (12:1–8)

2. When a woman at childbirth bears a male Literally, “When a woman is inseminated and bears a male.”

she shall be impure as at the time of her menstrual infirmity Not only the duration but the actual nature of the impurity resembles that of a menstruating woman (see 15:19–24).

3. Circumcision is first mandated in the context of the covenant between God and Abraham (Gen. 17:10–14).

4. blood purification Discharges of blood that

occur after the initial period of impurity are unlike menstrual blood and are not regarded as impure.

until her period of purification is completed Although the new mother was no longer impure because of discharges, she was still barred from entry into the sanctuary and from contact with consecrated objects. She had to wait until a specific period of time had elapsed before she could be declared pure.

5. The time periods are doubled for a female, but the provisions are the same.

2. Is the normal period of impurity after giving birth one week, and is it doubled after the birth of a daughter because the new mother has given birth to a child who will herself contain the divine gift of nurturing and giving birth to a new life? Or is the normal period two weeks, only to be reduced after the birth of a son to allow the mother to attend the *b'rit* in a state of ritual purity, or because *b'rit milah* on the eighth day is a purifying rite?

3. The unique ceremony of *b'rit milah* is performed on the male infant's generative organ to symbolize that the Covenant is passed on from generation to generation, from father

to son. Except in cases of conversion (e.g., when a non-Jewish mother wishes to raise the child as a Jew), circumcision does not make the child Jewish. It celebrates the fact that he is born into the Covenant. Ceremonies for the home and for the synagogue have been created to welcome newborn girls into the Covenant with the same sense of importance and celebration as welcoming boys. Many other societies circumcised young boys at adolescence, as an ordeal of passage and a preparation for marriage and sexual activity. By moving the ritual back to infancy, biblical tradition stripped it of its erotic element and transmuted it into a symbol of the Covenant.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

12:2. as at the time of her menstrual infirmity Traditionally, the woman waits for seven days after bleeding ceases and immerses in a *mikveh* (ritual bath) before resuming relations. Immersion in a *mikveh* is not required after caesarian delivery.

12:3. On the eighth day See Gen. 17:12. The covenant of circumcision (*b'rit milah*) takes place on the eighth day of the child's life. This includes *Shabbat* and holy days (S.A. YD 266:2), unless the child was born through caesarian section. The *b'rit milah* is postponed only out of consideration for the health of the child.

⁶On the completion of her period of purification, for either son or daughter, she shall bring to the priest, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a purification offering. ⁷He shall offer it before the LORD and make expiation on her behalf; she shall then be pure from her flow of blood. Such are the rituals concerning her who bears a child, male or female. ⁸If, however, her means do not suffice for a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a purification offering. The priest shall make expiation on her behalf, and she shall be pure.

וּבְמִלֵּאת ⁶ | יְמֵי טְהֻרָה לְבֵן א֥וּ לְבַת
תָּבִיא כֶּבֶשׂ בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה וּבֶן־יוֹנָה
אוֹתָר לְחֻטָּאת אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל־מוֹעֵד
אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: ⁷ וְהִקְרִיבֹוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְכִפֹּר
עָלֶיהָ וְטָהֲרָה מִמָּקַר דְּמִיָּה זֹאת תּוֹרַת
הַיִּלָּדֹת לְזָכָר א֥וּ לְנִקְבָּה: ⁸ וְאִם־לֹא
תִמְצָא יָדָהּ דֵּי שֶׁהָ וְלִקְחָה שְׁתֵּי־תוֹרִים
א֥וּ שְׁנֵי בָנִי יוֹנָה אֶחָד לְעֹלָה וְאֶחָד
לְחֻטָּאת וְכִפֹּר עָלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן וְטָהֲרָה: פ

13 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

יג וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן
לֵאמֹר:

6. On the completion of her period of purification After the termination of the second period, rites are performed to readmit her into the sanctuary and into the religious life of the community.

purification offering Hebrew: *hattat*; needed here solely to remove impurity. All impurity, however contracted, could lead to sinfulness if not attended to, and failure to deal properly with impurity aroused God's anger. The purification of-

fering restored to the person the right of access to the sanctuary; and the burnt offering (*olah*) that followed immediately symbolized this renewed acceptability.

8. If, however, her means do not suffice The right to bring a less-expensive sacrifice is standard for a number of purifications and religious obligations. Without it, poor Israelites would have been deprived of expiation when they incurred impurity through no fault of their own.

THE PURIFICATION OF SKIN DISEASES (13:1–14:57)

Chapters 13 and 14 prescribe the role of the Israelite priesthood in diagnosing and purifying persons afflicted with a skin disease known as *tzara-at*. This disease also contaminated fabrics and leather as well as plastered or mud-covered building stones. The identification of biblical *tzara-at* with leprosy is unlikely, if by "leprosy" is meant Hansen's disease; the symptoms pre-

sented in this chapter do not conform to the nature or the course of that disease. The term "*tzara-at*" probably designated a complex of various ailments. The priest combined medical and ritual procedures in safeguarding the purity of the sanctuary and of the Israelite community. Precisely why skin diseases were singled out in the priestly codes is not certain. *Tzara-at* was preva-

6. The new mother's burnt offering is seen by some as a form of an offering of gratitude (*todah*) for having survived the experience of childbirth or on behalf of the newborn for having been released into life from the confinement of the womb (Lev. R. 14:3). Why a purification offering? Hoffman sees it as the sacrifice of one compelled by circumstance to stay

away from the sanctuary, who now brings a dove to symbolize her return to her spiritual home like a dove to its nest. The Talmud speculates that some women, because of the pain of childbirth, may have vowed to abstain from further sexual relations to avoid such pain. The offering is part of the process that releases her from that rash vow (BT Nid. 31b).

²When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling, a rash, or a discoloration, and it develops into a scaly affection on the skin of his body, it shall be reported to Aaron the priest

אָדָם פִּי־יְהִיָּה בְּעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ שָׂאֵת אֹר־
סִפְחָת אֹר בְּהֶרֶת וְיִהְיֶה בְּעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֹגַע
צָרַעַת וְהוּבֵא אֶל־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אֹר אֶל־

lent in ancient Israel and was presumed to be contagious.

THE SYMPTOMS (13:1–8)

The priest's initial problem was to determine

whether the sufferer had acute *tzara-at* or some less serious ailment with which it might be confused, but which would heal.

2. it shall be reported to Aaron the priest The afflicted person must be brought before the priest.

CHAPTER 13

At least three things are worthy of note regarding the role of the *kohen* in treating leprous afflictions. First, in biblical Israel, the *kohen* was both the religious and the medical authority. The biblical mind saw the connection between the physical and the spiritual dimensions of illness and recovery (perhaps more clearly than we see it today). When the *kohen* visited the afflicted person in isolation and examined the person's sores, the experience of being cared for by the most prestigious person in the community must have helped generate healing powers in the sick person.

Second, the role of the *kohen* was not simply to diagnose the ailment (and certainly not to treat it) but to reintegrate the person into the community as soon as possible. Religion sought to include, not to isolate, the afflicted person. If the laws of leprosy were fashioned for reasons of health and contagion, Hirsch notes, they would be stringent in borderline cases. Instead, doubtful cases are deemed ritually pure.

Finally, we note that the *kohen* performs the ritual only after the *tzara-at* has disappeared, to avoid the appearance of performing a magical cure.

2. Despite a posture of sympathy for afflicted persons and a commitment to ameliorate their condition, the Sages often could not resist the temptation to ask, "What moral or spiritual failing may have caused this illness?" They see the Torah's discussion of illness in the abstract as an opportunity to make a moral point, although they caution us that it is insensitive to tell an ailing person, "You are suffering because of your sins." Anticipating what we recently have come to know about the unity joining the physical and the emotional dimensions of illness, they could understand illness as the result of moral as well as physical causes. Their outlook has been summarized as seeing *tzara-at* "not as a bodily disease but as

the physical manifestation of a spiritual malaise." The leper is isolated from human society not because of the contagious skin disease but as a punishment for antisocial behavior. Yet one of the Sages insists, "When a person is in pain, what does the divine Presence say? 'It is My own head that aches, it is My own arm that aches'" (M Sanh. 6:5).

Playing on the linguistic similarity of the Hebrew for "leper" (*m'tzora*) and the Hebrew for "one who gossips" (*motzi shem ra*), the Sages considered leprosy to be a punishment for the sins of slander and malicious gossip (Lev. R. 16:1). They teach that gossip is like leprosy because it is highly contagious. One infected person can spread a malicious rumor to many others. They designate seven types of antisocial behavior that God punishes with *tzara-at*: "haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood in secret, a mind that hatches evil, feet quick to do wrong, a witness who testifies falsely, and one who incites brothers to quarrel" (citing Prov. 6:16–19). Those types of behavior share the attribute of being hard to punish in a court of law. God exacts punishment in a variety of appropriate ways: "As your rumors separated husband from wife and brother from brother, you will now be separated from all human contact." The Midrash adduces proof texts to show that people guilty of those misdeeds were punished with leprosy. Thus Miriam is stricken after speaking ill of her brother Moses (Num. 12:10). Even Moses is afflicted for speaking ill of the Israelites; when he is summoned by God at the Burning Bush to bring the Israelites news of their impending liberation, he hesitates, saying, "They will not believe me" (Exod. 4:1). As a result, his hand becomes leprous (4:6).

Today we recognize that it is medically inaccurate and psychologically cruel to tell someone that he or she is afflicted with illness as a punishment for behavior not organically related to the illness, or that failure to heal is

or to one of his sons, the priests.³The priest shall examine the affection on the skin of his body: if hair in the affected patch has turned white and the affection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous affection; when the priest sees it, he shall pronounce him impure.⁴But if it is a white discoloration on the skin of his body which does not appear to be deeper than the skin and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall isolate the affected person for seven days.⁵On the seventh day the priest shall examine him, and if the affection has remained unchanged in color and the disease has not spread on the skin, the priest shall isolate him for another seven days.⁶On the seventh day the priest shall examine him again: if the affection has faded and has not spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him pure. It is a rash; he shall wash his clothes, and he shall be pure.⁷But if the rash should spread on the skin after he has presented himself to the priest and been pronounced pure, he shall present himself again to the priest.⁸And if the priest sees that the rash has spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him impure; it is leprosy.

⁹When a person has a scaly affection, it shall

אֶחָד מִבְּנָיו הַכֹּהֲנִים: ³ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־
הַנֶּגַע בְּעוֹר־הַבָּשָׂר וְשָׁעַר בְּנֶגַע הַפֶּה |
לִבָּן וּמֵרָאָה הַנֶּגַע עֲמָק מֵעוֹר בָּשָׂרוֹ נֶגַע
צִרְעָתָהּ הוּא וְרָאָהּ הַכֹּהֵן וְטָמָא אֹתוֹ:
⁴ וְאִם־יִבְהַרֵּת לְבָנָהּ הוּא בְּעוֹר בָּשָׂרוֹ
וְעֲמָק אֵין־מֵרָאָה מִן־הָעוֹר וְשָׁעֲרָה לֹא־
הַפֶּה לִבָּן וְהִסְגִּיר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּגַע שְׁבַע־
יָמִים: ⁵ וְרָאָהּ הַכֹּהֵן בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְהִנֵּה
הַנֶּגַע עָמַד בְּעֵינָיו לֹא־פָשָׁה הַנֶּגַע בְּעוֹר
וְהִסְגִּירוֹ הַכֹּהֵן שְׁבַע־יָמִים שְׁנִית: ⁶ וְרָאָהּ הַכֹּהֵן אֹתוֹ בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שְׁנִית
וְהִנֵּה בִּהָה הַנֶּגַע וְלֹא־פָשָׁה הַנֶּגַע בְּעוֹר
וְטָהֲרוֹ הַכֹּהֵן מִסְּפַחַת הִיא וְכִבֵּס בְּגָדָיו
וְטָהַר: ⁷ וְאִם־פָּשָׁה תִּפְשָׁה הַמְּסַפַּחַת
בְּעוֹר אַחֲרֵי הָרֵאָתָהּ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן לְטַהֲרָתָהּ
וְנִרְאָה שְׁנִית אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: ⁸ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן
וְהִנֵּה פָשְׁתָה הַמְּסַפַּחַת בְּעוֹר וְטָמָא
הַכֹּהֵן צִרְעָתָהּ הוּא: ⁹ נֶגַע צִרְעָתָה כִּי תִהְיֶה בָאָדָם וְהוּבָא

4. the priest shall isolate the affected person More precisely, “he shall confine, lock up” (*v'hisgir*) the affected person. A special dwelling was used for this purpose.

6. he shall wash his clothes Laundering one's garments was a procedure frequently included in purification rites.

8. it is leprosy That is, it is acute *tzara-at*.

CHRONIC AILMENTS (vv. 9–17)

If a person with a chronic ailment is brought to the priest, a different set of diagnostic criteria is applied. Exposed (“raw”) flesh in an infected area indicates that the old ailment never healed prop-

to be blamed on a lack of will. It should be noted that the Torah itself presents *tzara-at* as an affliction to be cured, not as a punishment to be explained. We might ask: What actions or conditions cause an individual to be isolated from the community today? And what can religious institutions do to restore that person to the community?

Salanter taught that the laws of leprosy and gossip follow immediately after the dietary laws to teach us to be as scrupulous about what comes out of our mouths as we are about what

goes into them. He saw the essential sin of gossip as focusing on the faults of others rather than looking to improve ourselves. Society says to the slanderer, “If you are so good at recognizing faults, go live by yourself and discover your own faults and shortcomings.”

3. when the priest sees it One commentator reads this as “when the priest sees him” (*Meshekh Hokhmah*). The priest is to examine the whole person, not only the diseased limb. He is to see what is whole and healthy about the person, not only what is afflicted.

be reported to the priest.¹⁰ If the priest finds on the skin a white swelling which has turned some hair white, with a patch of undischored flesh in the swelling,¹¹ it is chronic leprosy on the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him impure; he need not isolate him, for he is impure.¹² If the eruption spreads out over the skin so that it covers all the skin of the affected person from head to foot, wherever the priest can see—¹³ if the priest sees that the eruption has covered the whole body—he shall pronounce the affected person pure; he is pure, for he has turned all white.¹⁴ But as soon as undischored flesh appears in it, he shall be impure; ¹⁵ when the priest sees the undischored flesh, he shall pronounce him impure. The undischored flesh is impure; it is leprosy.¹⁶ But if the undischored flesh again turns white, he shall come to the priest,¹⁷ and the priest shall examine him: if the affection has turned white, the priest shall pronounce the affected person pure; he is pure.

¹⁸ When an inflammation appears on the skin of one's body and it heals,¹⁹ and a white swelling

אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: ¹⁰ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָיָה שְׂאֵת־
לְבָנָה בְּעוֹר וְהָיָה הַפֶּכֶה שְׂעָר לָבָן וּמַחִית
בָּשָׂר חַי בְּשֵׂאֵת: ¹¹ צִרְעַת נוֹשֶׁנֶת הוּא
בְּעוֹר בָּשָׂרוֹ וְטִמְאָו הַכֹּהֵן לֹא יִסְגְּרוֹנוּ כִּי
טָמֵא הוּא: ¹² וְאִם־פָּרוּחַ תִּפְרַח הַצִּרְעַת
בְּעוֹר וְכִסְתָּהּ הַצִּרְעַת אֶת כָּל־עוֹר הַנֶּגַע
מֵרֹאשׁוֹ וְעַד־רַגְלָיו לְכָל־מְרֹאֶה עֵינָיו
הַכֹּהֵן: ¹³ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָיָה כִּסְתָּהּ
הַצִּרְעַת אֶת־כָּל־בָּשָׂרוֹ וְטָהַר אֶת־הַנֶּגַע
כָּלּוֹ הַפֶּךָ לָבָן טָהוֹר הוּא: ¹⁴ וּבַיּוֹם
הָרִאשׁוֹן בּוֹ בָּשָׂר חַי יִטְמָא: ¹⁵ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן
אֶת־הַבָּשָׂר הַחַי וְטִמְאָו הַבָּשָׂר הַחַי טָמֵא
הוּא צִרְעַת הוּא: ¹⁶ אֹךְ כִּי יָשׁוּב הַבָּשָׂר
הַחַי וְנִהְפָּךְ לְלָבָן וּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן:
¹⁷ וְרָאָהוּ הַכֹּהֵן וְהָיָה נִהְפָּךְ הַנֶּגַע לְלָבָן
וְטָהַר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּגַע טָהוֹר הוּא: פ
¹⁸ וּבָשָׂר כִּי־יִהְיֶה בּוֹ־בְעוֹר שְׂחִין וְנִרְפָּא:
¹⁹ וְהָיָה בַּמָּקוֹם הַשְּׂחִין שְׂאֵת לְבָנָה אֹךְ

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erly. If, however, the exposed flesh is subsequently covered by new skin (referred to in the text as “turning completely white”), this indicates that the chronic *tzara-at* has healed.

9. When a person has a scaly affection That is, when a person shows the priest an old ailment of the skin that may represent the recurrence of chronic *tzara-at*.

10. a white swelling which has turned some hair white Literally, “a white inflammation, in which the hair has turned white.”

undischored flesh That is, exposed flesh. When healing occurs, white, normal skin grows over the infected area. Recurrence of infection is indicated by the reappearance of raw flesh.

11. it is chronic leprosy . . . he need not isolate him No need for quarantine, because it is determined at the outset that acute *tzara-at* has occurred.

12. wherever the priest can see That is, after the priest's complete examination.

13. for he has turned all white Exposed, or raw, flesh is a reddish color—not white, like normal skin. This, then, is the criterion: Skin turned

white is new skin that has grown over the raw area.

14. as soon as undischored flesh appears in it If exposed flesh reappears on it, the old infection has not been covered by new skin and will not heal properly, and the individual has chronic *tzara-at*.

16. if the undischored flesh again turns white If the exposed flesh recedes and resumes its whiteness, then new (“white”) skin has grown over the infected, exposed flesh.

TZARA-AT AS COMPLICATION (vv. 18–46)

This section deals with *tzara-at* that arises as a complication, i.e., a secondary development, out of other conditions. These symptoms are (a) *sh'hin*, a term characterizing a number of conditions similar to dermatitis; (b) a burn that became infected; (c) diseases of the hair; (d) a skin condition identified as vitiligo; and (e) ailments of the scalp and forehead.

18. an inflammation appears on the skin . . . and it heals The primary condition, dermatitis, had healed, but a secondary infection had developed in the same area.

or a white discoloration streaked with red develops where the inflammation was, he shall present himself to the priest. ²⁰If the priest finds that it appears lower than the rest of the skin and that the hair in it has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him impure; it is a leprous affection that has broken out in the inflammation. ²¹But if the priest finds that there is no white hair in it and it is not lower than the rest of the skin, and it is faded, the priest shall isolate him for seven days. ²²If it should spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him impure; it is an affection. ²³But if the discoloration remains stationary, not having spread, it is the scar of the inflammation; the priest shall pronounce him pure.

²⁴When the skin of one's body sustains a burn by fire, and the patch from the burn is a discoloration, either white streaked with red, or white, ²⁵the priest shall examine it. If some hair has turned white in the discoloration, which itself appears to go deeper than the skin, it is leprosy that has broken out in the burn. The priest shall pronounce him impure; it is a leprous affection. ²⁶But if the priest finds that there is no white hair in the discoloration, and that it is not lower than the rest of the skin, and it is faded, the priest shall isolate him for seven days. ²⁷On the seventh day the priest shall examine him: if it has spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him impure; it is a leprous affection. ²⁸But if the discoloration has remained stationary, not having spread on the skin, and it is faded, it is the swelling from the burn. The priest shall pronounce him pure, for it is the scar of the burn.

²⁹If a man or a woman has an affection on the head or in the beard, ³⁰the priest shall ex-

בהרת לבנה אדמדמת ונראה אל-הכהן: ²⁰וראה הכהן והנה מראה שפל מן-העור ושערה הפך לבן וטמאו הכהן נגע-צרעת הוא בשחין פרוחה: ²¹ואם יראה הכהן והנה אין-בה שער לבן ושפלה איננה מן-העור והיא כהה והסגירו הכהן שבעת ימים: ²²ואם פשה תפשה בעור וטמא הכהן אותו נגע הוא: ²³ואם-תחתיה תעמד הבהרת לא פשתה צרבת השחין הוא וטהרו הכהן: ס

²⁴או בשר פיהיה בערו מכות-אש והיתה מחית המכה בהרת לבנה אדמדמת או לבנה: ²⁵וראה אתה הכהן והנה נהפך שער לבן בבהרת ומראה עמק מן-העור צרעת הוא במכה פרוחה וטמא אותו הכהן נגע צרעת הוא: ²⁶ואם יראה הכהן והנה אין-בבהרת שער לבן ושפלה איננה מן-העור והיא כהה והסגירו הכהן שבעת ימים: ²⁷וראהו הכהן ביום השביעי אם-פשה תפשה בעור וטמא הכהן אותו נגע צרעת הוא: ²⁸ואם-תחתיה תעמד הבהרת לא-פשתה בעור והוא כהה שאת המכה הוא וטהרו הכהן פי-צרבת המכה הוא: פ

²⁹ואיש או אשה פיהיה בו נגע בראש או בזקן: ³⁰וראה הכהן את-הנגע והנה

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20. The symptomatology here is essentially the same as that applicable to the diagnosis of an initial condition of *tzara-at*, in verses 1–8.

24. the patch from the burn is a discoloration

The exposed skin is a pink or white shiny spot.

29. The hair, which is rooted in layers of the skin, is directly affected by conditions (such as acne) that disturb the hair follicles.

amine the affection. If it appears to go deeper than the skin and there is thin yellow hair in it, the priest shall pronounce him impure; it is a scall, a scaly eruption in the hair or beard.³¹ But if the priest finds that the scall affection does not appear to go deeper than the skin, yet there is no black hair in it, the priest shall isolate the person with the scall affection for seven days.³² On the seventh day the priest shall examine the affection. If the scall has not spread and no yellow hair has appeared in it, and the scall does not appear to go deeper than the skin,³³ the person with the scall shall shave himself, but without shaving the scall; the priest shall isolate him for another seven days.³⁴ On the seventh day the priest shall examine the scall. If the scall has not spread on the skin, and does not appear to go deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce him pure; he shall wash his clothes, and he shall be pure.³⁵ If, however, the scall should spread on the skin after he has been pronounced pure,³⁶ the priest shall examine him. If the scall has spread on the skin, the priest need not look for yellow hair: he is impure.³⁷ But if the scall has remained unchanged in color, and black hair has grown in it, the scall is healed; he is pure. The priest shall pronounce him pure.

³⁸If a man or a woman has the skin of the body

מֵרָאֵהוּ עִמָּק מִן־הָעוֹר וּבוֹ שֵׁעַר צָהָב דָּק וְטָמֵא אֹתוֹ הִכְהֵן נֶתֶק הוּא צָרַעַת הָרֹאשׁ אוֹ הַזָּקֵן הוּא: ³¹ וְכִי־יִרְאֶה הִכְהֵן אֶת־נֶגַע הַנֶּתֶק וְהָיָה אֵין־מֵרָאֵהוּ עִמָּק מִן־הָעוֹר וְשֵׁעַר שָׁחַר אֵין בּוֹ וְהִסְגִּיר הִכְהֵן אֶת־נֶגַע הַנֶּתֶק שְׁבַע־יָמִים: ³² וְרָאֵה הִכְהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּגַע בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְהָיָה לֹא־פֶשַׁה הַנֶּתֶק וְלֹא־הָיָה בּוֹ שֵׁעַר צָהָב וּמֵרָאֵה הַנֶּתֶק אֵין עִמָּק מִן־הָעוֹר: ³³ וְהִתְגַּלַּח * וְאֶת־הַנֶּתֶק לֹא יְגַלַּח וְהִסְגִּיר הִכְהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּתֶק שְׁבַע־יָמִים שְׁנִית: ³⁴ וְרָאֵה הִכְהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּתֶק בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְהָיָה לֹא־פֶשַׁה הַנֶּתֶק בָּעוֹר וּמֵרָאֵהוּ אֵינְנוּ עִמָּק מִן־הָעוֹר וְטָהַר אֹתוֹ הִכְהֵן וּכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְטָהַר: ³⁵ וְאִם־פֶּשַׁה יִפְשַׁה הַנֶּתֶק בָּעוֹר אַחֲרֵי טָהֳרָתוֹ: ³⁶ וְרָאֵהוּ הִכְהֵן וְהָיָה פֶשַׁה הַנֶּתֶק בָּעוֹר לֹא־יִבְקֹר הִכְהֵן לְשֵׁעַר הַצָּהָב טָמֵא הוּא: ³⁷ וְאִם־בְּעֵינָיו עָמַד הַנֶּתֶק וְשֵׁעַר שָׁחַר צָמַח־בּוֹ נִרְפָּא הַנֶּתֶק טָהוֹר הוּא וְטָהַר הִכְהֵן: ס

³⁸ וְאִישׁ אוֹ־אִשָּׁה כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְּעוֹר־בָּשָׂרָם

v. 33. ג' רבתי לפי נוסחים מקובלים

30–31. This passage is describing the progressive stages of a complication whose treatment differs somewhat from acute *tzara-at* because of the background condition involved. Verse 30 stipulates that if both positive symptoms appear, acute *tzara-at* is indicated. Verse 31 states that if only one symptom occurs—the absence of black, normal hair (which is equivalent to the presence of yellow, infected hair)—quarantine is imposed, because a final determination cannot yet be made.

thin yellow hair The symptoms are generally similar to those of skin ailments, except that yellow, not white, hair is the discoloration to be watched for.

scall Hebrew: *netek*, which refers to the condition of hair follicles, not of skin, and describes

the follicles as being “torn” from the scalp after “splitting.”

32. On the seventh day the priest shall examine the affection Three conditions must exist for a declaration of purity to be issued at this stage: no yellow hair, no enlargement of the lesions, and no recessed lesions. To allow for clearer observation, the hair is shaved around the infected areas, leaving the areas themselves unshaven.

36. the scall has spread on the skin Any enlargement of the lesions after 14 days is sufficient to warrant a diagnosis of acute *tzara-at*. The priest need look no further for yellow hair.

37. the scall has remained unchanged If normal-colored hair grows back in the infected area and there has been no subsequent enlargement of the lesions, the *netek* infection has healed.

streaked with white discolorations,³⁹ and the priest sees that the discolorations on the skin of the body are of a dull white, it is a tetter broken out on the skin; he is pure.

⁴⁰If a man loses the hair of his head and becomes bald, he is pure. ⁴¹If he loses the hair on the front part of his head and becomes bald at the forehead, he is pure. ⁴²But if a white affection streaked with red appears on the bald part in the front or at the back of the head, it is a scaly eruption that is spreading over the bald part in the front or at the back of the head. ⁴³The priest shall examine him: if the swollen affection on the bald part in the front or at the back of his head is white streaked with red, like the leprosy of body skin in appearance, ⁴⁴the man is leprous; he is impure. The priest shall pronounce him impure; he has the affection on his head.

⁴⁵As for the person with a leprous affection, his clothes shall be rent, his head shall be left bare, and he shall cover over his upper lip; and he shall call out, "Impure! Impure!" ⁴⁶He shall be impure as long as the disease is on him. Being impure, he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

38–39. These verses deal with an ailment known as *bohak* (brightness), identified by some medical authorities as vitiligo. It is a rash that is not acute.

40. If a man loses the hair of his head and becomes bald This section (vv. 40–44) deals with cases in which a person was bald before the outbreak of the ailment in question.

43. If the inflamed infection is whitish on the bald pate or on the forehead, the person is suffering from acute *tzara-at*.

45. the person with a leprous affection

45. he shall call out, "Impure! Impure!" According to the Talmud, one does this not only to warn others of the contagion but also to elicit compassion and prayers on one's behalf (BT MK 5a). It is the responsibility of an afflicted person to recognize the illness and ask for help; and it is the responsibility of the com-

בְּהֵרֶת בְּהֵרֶת לְבָנֹת: ³⁹ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה
בְּעוֹר־בָּשָׂרָם בְּהֵרֶת כְּהוֹת לְבָנֹת בְּהֵק
הוּא פָּרַח בְּעוֹר טָהוֹר הוּא: ס

⁴⁰ וְאִישׁ כִּי יִמְרֹט רֹאשׁוֹ קָרַח הוּא טָהוֹר
הוּא: ⁴¹ וְאִם מִפֶּתַח פָּנָיו יִמְרֹט רֹאשׁוֹ
גִּבָּח הוּא טָהוֹר הוּא: ⁴² וְכִי־יִהְיֶה
בְּקִרְחָתוֹ אֹו בְּגִבָּחַת נֹגַע לְבָן אֲדָמָה
צֹרַעַת פִּרְחָת הוּא בְּקִרְחָתוֹ אֹו בְּגִבָּחָתוֹ:
⁴³ וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה שְׂאֵת־הַנֶּגַע
לְבָנָה אֲדָמָה בְּקִרְחָתוֹ אֹו בְּגִבָּחָתוֹ
כְּמֵרָאָה צֹרַעַת עוֹר בָּשָׂר: ⁴⁴ אִישׁ־צֹרַע
הוּא טָמֵא הוּא טָמֵא יִטְמְאוּנוּ הַכֹּהֵן
בְּרֹאשׁוֹ נֹגַעוֹ:

⁴⁵ וְהִצְרֹועַ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ הַנֶּגַע בְּגָדָיו יִהְיֶה
פְּרָמִים וְרֹאשׁוֹ יִהְיֶה פְרוּעַ וְעַל־שָׂפָם
יַעֲטֶה וְטָמֵא | טָמֵא יִקְרָא: ⁴⁶ כָּל־יָמָיו אֲשֶׁר
הַנֶּגַע בּוֹ יִטְמֵא טָמֵא הוּא בְּדֹד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ
לַמִּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבּוֹ: ס

Namely, one who suffers from the acute condition stated in verse 8.

his head shall be left bare Baring the head so that the hair hung loose was a customary way of shaming a person, as was covering the upper lip.

and he shall call out, "Impure!" The sufferer must warn all who approach that he is impure.

46. as long as the disease is on him Thus, an individual suffering from acute *tzara-at* may be banished permanently.

munity to offer support and prayer rather than shun or ignore the afflicted.

One commentator reads, "the impure shall call out, 'Impure!'" That is, people tend to project their own failings onto others. A corrupt person sees corruption all around (BT Kid. 70a).

⁴⁷When an eruptive affection occurs in a cloth of wool or linen fabric, ⁴⁸in the warp or in the woof of the linen or the wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin; ⁴⁹if the affection in the cloth or the skin, in the warp or the woof, or in any article of skin, is streaky green or red, it is an eruptive affection. It shall be shown to the priest; ⁵⁰and the priest, after examining the affection, shall isolate the affected article for seven days. ⁵¹On the seventh day he shall examine the affection: if the affection has spread in the cloth—whether in the warp or the woof, or in the skin, for whatever purpose the skin may be used—the affection is a malignant eruption; it is impure. ⁵²The cloth—whether warp or woof in wool or linen, or any article of skin—in which the affection is found, shall be burned, for it is a malignant eruption; it shall be consumed in fire. ⁵³But if the priest sees that the affection in the cloth—whether in warp or in woof, or in any article of skin—has not spread, ⁵⁴the priest shall order the affected article washed, and he shall isolate it for another seven days. ⁵⁵And if, after the affected article has been washed, the priest sees that the affection has not changed color and that it has not spread, it is impure. It shall be consumed in fire; it is a fret, whether on its inner side or on its outer side. ⁵⁶But if the priest sees that the affected part, after it has been washed, is faded, he shall tear it out from the cloth or skin, whether in the warp or

וְהַבִּגְדִּי כִּי־יִהְיֶה בּוֹ נֶגַע צֹרֶעַת בְּבִגְדִּי אֹרֶז אִם בְּבִגְדִּי פִשְׁתִּים: ⁴⁸אֹרֶז בְּשֵׁתִי אֹרֶז בְּעֶרֶב לִפְשָׁתִים וְלִצְמָר אֹרֶז בְּעוֹר אֹרֶז בְּכָל־מְלֹאכֶת עוֹר: ⁴⁹וְהָיָה הַנֶּגַע יֶרֶקֶק אֹרֶז אֲדָמָדִם בְּבִגְדִּי אֹרֶז בְּעוֹר אֹרֶז בְּשֵׁתִי אֹרֶז בְּעֶרֶב אֹרֶז בְּכָל־כְּלִי־עוֹר נֶגַע צֹרֶעַת הוּא וְהָרָאָה אֶת־הַכֹּהֵן: ⁵⁰וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּגַע וְהִסְגִּיר אֶת־הַנֶּגַע שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: ⁵¹וְרָאָה אֶת־הַנֶּגַע בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי כִּי־פָשָׁה הִנֵּנִי בְּבִגְדִּי אֹרֶז בְּשֵׁתִי אֹרֶז בְּעֶרֶב אֹרֶז בְּעוֹר לְכָל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה הָעוֹר לְמִלְאכָה צֹרֶעַת מִמֶּאֱרַת הַנֶּגַע טָמֵא הוּא: ⁵²וְשָׂרָף אֶת־הַבִּגְדִּי אֹרֶז אֶת־הַשֵּׁתִי אֹרֶז אֶת־הָעֶרֶב בְּצֶמֶר אֹרֶז בְּפִשְׁתִּים אֹרֶז אֶת־כְּלִי הָעוֹר אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה בּוֹ הַנֶּגַע כִּי־צֹרֶעַת מִמֶּאֱרַת הוּא בָּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרָף: ⁵³וְאִם יִרְאֶה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה לֹא־פָשָׁה הַנֶּגַע בְּבִגְדִּי אֹרֶז בְּשֵׁתִי אֹרֶז בְּעֶרֶב אֹרֶז בְּכָל־כְּלִי־עוֹר: ⁵⁴וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וְכִבְּסוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ הַנֶּגַע וְהִסְגִּירוּ שִׁבְעַת־יָמִים שְׁנִית: ⁵⁵וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אַחֲרֵי אֵל הַכִּבֹּס אֶת־הַנֶּגַע וְהִנֵּה לֹא־הִפָּךְ הַנֶּגַע אֶת־עֵינֹו וְהַנֶּגַע לֹא־פָשָׁה טָמֵא הוּא בָּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרָפוּנוּ פָחַתָּהּ הוּא בְּקֶרְחָתָהּ אֹרֶז בְּגִבְחָתָהּ: ⁵⁶וְאִם רָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה כָּהֵן הַנֶּגַע אַחֲרֵי הַכִּבֹּס אֹתוֹ וְקָרַע אֹתוֹ מִן־הַבִּגְדִּי אֹרֶז מִן־הָעוֹר

שביעי
[רביעי]

TZARA·AT IN FABRICS AND LEATHER
(vv. 47–59)

This section deals with *tzara-at*-type infections

that damage fabrics and worked leather. They may have been some kinds of fungoid or sporoid infections.

47. Although most medieval and modern commentators see the eruption of *tzara-at* in clothing as a natural phenomenon, a form of rot or fungus, Maimonides and Ramban see it as supernatural, something that could take place only in the Land of Israel. Because of that land's sensitivity to immorality, even the clothes one wears would bear witness to the moral decay of the person wearing them.

Although the laws of *tum·ah* seem very foreign to us, they flow directly from the Israelites' sense that being able to come into God's presence is an irreplaceable privilege. This led them to be profoundly concerned with anything that might estrange them from the divine presence.

in the woof; ⁵⁷and if it occurs again in the cloth—whether in warp or in woof—or in any article of skin, it is a wild growth; the affected article shall be consumed in fire. ⁵⁸If, however, the affection disappears from the cloth—warp or woof—or from any article of skin that has been washed, it shall be washed again, and it shall be pure.

⁵⁹Such is the procedure for eruptive affections of cloth, woolen or linen, in warp or in woof, or of any article of skin, for pronouncing it pure or impure.

מפטיר או מן-השתי או מן-הערב: ⁵⁷ואם-
תראה עוד בגד או-בשתי או-בערב או
בכל-כלי-עור פרחת הוא באש תשרפנו
את אשר-בו הנגע: ⁵⁸והבגד או-השתי
או-הערב או-כל-כלי העור אשר תכבס
וסר מהם הנגע וכבס שנית וטהר:
⁵⁹זאת תורת נגע-צרעת בגד הצמר | או
הפשתים או השתי או הערב או כל-
כלי-עור לטהרו או לטמאו: * פ

* For the haftarah for this portion, see p. 671.

14 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²This shall be the ritual for a leper at the time that he is to be purified.

When it has been reported to the priest, ³the priest shall go outside the camp. If the priest sees that the leper has been healed of his scaly affection, ⁴the priest shall order two live pure birds, cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop to be brought for him who is to be purified. ⁵The priest shall order one of the birds slaughtered

יד וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ²זֹאת תְּהִיָּה תוֹרַת הַמִּצְוֶה בַּיּוֹם טְהָרָתוֹ וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: ³וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וַרְאֶה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָיָה נִרְפָּא נֶגַע־הַצֹּרַעַת מִן־הַצֹּרוּעַ: ⁴וַיֹּצִיֵּה הַכֹּהֵן וְלֶקַח לַמַּטְהָר שְׁתֵּי־צִפְרִים חַיִּים טְהוֹרִים וְעֵץ אֶרְזוֹ וּשְׁנֵי תוֹלַעַת וְאַזָּב: ⁵וַיֹּצִיֵּה הַכֹּהֵן וַשְׁחֹט אֶת־הַצֹּפּוֹר הָאֶחָת אֶל־כְּלִי־חָרָשׁ

THE PURIFICATION OF SKIN DISEASES (continued)

PURIFICATION RITES FOR INDIVIDUALS (14:1–32)

The rites ordained for the purification of a person who had suffered from *tzara-at* are among the most elaborate in the priestly laws. They demonstrate how seriously the *tzara-at* infections were regarded in ancient Israel.

2. ritual Hebrew: *torah*, which here means a manual of procedure for the priests, who administered the purification rites.

When it has been reported to the priest The priest went out to the afflicted person who

could not enter the camp, having been declared impure.

4. two live pure birds The birds must be physically sound and of a pure species.

crimson stuff Hebrew: *sh'ni tola-at*; literally, "the scarlet of the worm." A crimson dye is extracted from the eggs of an insect that lives in the leaves of oak trees. The cloth, most likely, was wool.

5. over fresh water in an earthen vessel Blood of the slaughtered bird not collected in the vessel would flow down into the earth. The Hebrew for "fresh water" (*mayim hayyim*) literally

CHAPTER 14

This *parashah* (read together with *Tazri-a* in most non-leap years) describes the ritual of purifying and reintegrating the recovered leper. We can read it as a description of the Israelites' attitude to the experience of recovering from illness. The text also discusses the appearance of a "plague" in the stones of a person's house and the implications of menstrual blood and seminal emissions as they relate to ritual impurity (*tum-ah*).

The formal description of the cleansing ritual masks the deep and possibly conflicted feelings of the person who has recovered from a serious illness. These might include feelings of relief and happiness together with a new appreciation of good health, perhaps resentment over what had been gone through as well as envy of people who had remained healthy. The offering of the recovered leper is sometimes referred to as "the sacrifice of one who has re-

turned from the dead," either because the illness was so grave or because a life cut off from all human contact, a life without friends and family, was not really a life.

3. the priest shall go outside the camp He is not to wait until people come to him with their concerns but must go to where the people are.

4. The offering included cedar wood, from the tallest and strongest of all plants, and hyssop, a kind of grass, the smallest and most vulnerable of all growing things. This was to symbolize the leveling power of illness, which afflicts the powerful and the powerless alike, and to teach the mighty a lesson about their vulnerability. The person recovered from illness may re-enter the camp but may not go home yet. Perhaps one who leaves the hospital or the isolation of serious illness with great relief is not yet fully oneself, not quite ready to resume the routines and responsibilities of normal life, home, and family.

over fresh water in an earthen vessel; ⁶and he shall take the live bird, along with the cedar wood, the crimson stuff, and the hyssop, and dip them together with the live bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. ⁷He shall then sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be purified of the eruption and purify him; and he shall set the live bird free in the open country. ⁸The one to be purified shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe in water; then he shall be pure. After that he may enter the camp, but he must remain outside his tent seven days. ⁹On the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair—of head, beard, and eyebrows. When he has shaved off all his hair, he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; then he shall be pure. ¹⁰On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish, three-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in for a grain offering, and one *log* of oil. ¹¹These shall be presented before the LORD, with the man to be purified, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, by the priest who performs the purification.

¹²The priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it with the *log* of oil as a reparation offering, and he shall elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD. ¹³The lamb shall be slaughtered at the spot in the sacred area

עַל־מִים חַיִּים: ⁶ אֶת־הַצִּפֹּר הַחַיָּה יִקַּח אֹתָהּ וְאֶת־עֵץ הָאָרֶז וְאֶת־שֵׁנִי הַתּוֹלַעַת וְאֶת־הָאֵזֹב וְטָבַל אוֹתָם וְאֶת | הַצִּפֹּר הַחַיָּה בְּדָם הַצִּפֹּר הַשְּׁחֻטָּה עַל הַמִּים הַחַיִּים: ⁷ וְהִזָּה עַל הַמְּטַהֵר מִן־הַצִּרְעָת שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים וְטָהֲרוּ וְשִׁלַּח אֶת־הַצִּפֹּר הַחַיָּה עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה: ⁸ וְכִבֶּס הַמְּטַהֵר אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְגִלַּח אֶת־כָּל־שְׁעָרוֹ וְרַחֵץ בַּמֵּיִם וְטָהֵר וְאַחֵר יָבוֹא אֶל־הַמִּחֲנֶה וַיֵּשֶׁב מִחוּץ לָאֹהֶל שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: ⁹ וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי יִגֹּלַח אֶת־כָּל־שְׁעָרוֹ אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ וְאֶת־זָקְנוֹ וְאֶת גִּבּוֹת עֵינָיו וְאֶת־כָּל־שְׁעָרוֹ יִגֹּלַח וְכִבֶּס אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ אֶת־בָּשָׁרוֹ בַּמֵּיִם וְטָהֵר: ¹⁰ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִקַּח שְׁנֵי־כִבְשִׁיִּם תְּמִימִים וְכִבְשָׁה אַחַת בֶּת־שָׁנָתָה תְּמִימָה וְשִׁלְשָׁה עֶשְׂרִים סֵלֶת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן וְלֹג אֶחָד שֶׁמֶן: ¹¹ וְהִעֲמִיד הַכֹּהֵן הַמְּטַהֵר אֶת הָאִישׁ הַמְּטַהֵר וְאֹתָם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

¹² וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ הָאֶחָד וְהִקְרִיב אוֹתוֹ לְאַשֶׁם וְאֶת־לֹג הַשֶּׁמֶן וְהִנִּיף אוֹתָם שְׁנֵי תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ¹³ וְשָׁחַט אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחַט אֶת־הַחֻטָּאת וְאֶת־

means "living water." It is water that flows continually, like that of springs.

9. of head, beard, and eyebrows It was normally forbidden to shave the beard or the side-locks of the head (19:27). Exceptions are made for these rites of purification.

10. log About 10 fluid ounces (0.3 L).

11. The person undergoing purification is stationed near the entrance of the Tent of Meet-

ing, together with the material assembled for use in the purification.

12. reparation offering This provided sacrificial blood to be sprinkled on the extremities of the individual who was being purified; blood from the burnt offering or from the purification offering could not be applied to the human body.

13. at the spot in the sacred area That is, on the north side of the altar (see 1:11, 4:24, and 7:2).

9. bathe his body in water This was not simply to cleanse oneself. It symbolized rebirth and re-creation—just as an infant is born out of water, just as a convert emerges out of water to a new life and a new identity, just as the

world was created out of water (Gen. 1:2). The experience of illness and recovery has made the leper a new person—that is, someone who now looks at life differently (*Seifer Ha-Hinnukh*).

where the purification offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered. For the reparation offering, like the purification offering, goes to the priest; it is most holy. ¹⁴The priest shall take some of the blood of the reparation offering, and the priest shall put it on the ridge of the right ear of him who is being purified, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. ¹⁵The priest shall then take some of the *log* of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. ¹⁶And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in the palm of his left hand and sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. ¹⁷Some of the oil left in his palm shall be put by the priest on the ridge of the right ear of the one being purified, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot—over the blood of the reparation offering. ¹⁸The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one being purified. Thus the priest shall make expiation for him before the LORD. ¹⁹The priest shall then offer the purification offering and make expiation for the one being purified of his impurity. Last, the burnt offering shall be slaughtered, ²⁰and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar, and the priest shall make expiation for him. Then he shall be pure.

²¹If, however, he is poor and his means are insufficient, he shall take one male lamb for a reparation offering, to be elevated in expiation

14. on the ridge of the right ear The person was treated literally from head to foot.

18. The rites were essential to securing expiation, or purification. The purification offering and the burnt offering were also parts of the purification rites. The purification offering served to place the individual in good standing with God.

הָעֹלָה בַּמָּקוֹם הַקָּדֹשׁ כִּי כֹחַטָּאת הָאִשָּׁם
הוּא לִכְהֹן קֹדֶשׁ קֹדָשִׁים הוּא: ¹⁴ וְלָקַח
הַכֹּהֵן מִדָּם הָאִשָּׁם וְנָתַן הַכֹּהֵן עַל-
תְּנוּפָה אֲזֵן הַמִּטְהָר הַיְּמָנִית וְעַל-בֶּהֱן
יָדוֹ הַיְּמָנִית וְעַל-בֶּהֱן רִגְלוֹ הַיְּמָנִית:
¹⁵ וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִלֵּג הַשֶּׁמֶן וַיִּצַק עַל-כַּף
הַכֹּהֵן הַשְּׂמָאלִית: ¹⁶ וְטָבַל הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-
אֶצְבָּעוֹ הַיְּמָנִית מִן-הַשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-כַּפוֹ
הַשְּׂמָאלִית וַהֲזָה מִן-הַשֶּׁמֶן בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ
שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ¹⁷ וּמִיָּתֶר הַשֶּׁמֶן
אֲשֶׁר עַל-כַּפוֹ יִתֵּן הַכֹּהֵן עַל-תְּנוּפָה אֲזֵן
הַמִּטְהָר הַיְּמָנִית וְעַל-בֶּהֱן יָדוֹ הַיְּמָנִית
וְעַל-בֶּהֱן רִגְלוֹ הַיְּמָנִית עַל דָּם הָאִשָּׁם:
¹⁸ וַהֲנוֹתֵר בַּשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל-כַּף הַכֹּהֵן יִתֵּן
עַל-רֹאשׁ הַמִּטְהָר וּכְפָר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן לִפְנֵי
יְהוָה: ¹⁹ וַעֲשֵׂה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַחֹטָאת וּכְפָר
עַל-הַמִּטְהָר מִטְּמֵאתוֹ וְאַחֵר יִשְׁחַט אֶת-
הָעֹלָה: ²⁰ וַהֲעֵלָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הָעֹלָה וְאֶת-
הַמִּנְחָה הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וּכְפָר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן
וְטָהֵר: ס

וְאִם-דָּל הוּא וְאֵין יָדוֹ מִשְׁגֶּת וְלָקַח ²¹
כֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד אִשָּׁם לְתִנּוּפָה לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו
שלישי
[חמישי]

The burnt offering symbolized renewed acceptability as a worshiper and full reinstatement in the community.

21–32. These verses repeat the rites prescribed in verses 1–20, except that birds are substituted for animals in the burnt offering and in the purification offering.

17. The oil is placed on the leper's head, hand, and foot and sprinkled on the altar, to convey the idea that recovery from illness is

the combined result of our actions, our attitudes, and divine grace.

for him, one-tenth of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in for a grain offering, and a *log* of oil;²² and two turtledoves or two pigeons, depending on his means, the one to be the purification offering and the other the burnt offering.²³ On the eighth day of his purification he shall bring them to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, before the LORD.²⁴ The priest shall take the lamb of reparation offering and the *log* of oil, and elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD.²⁵ When the lamb of reparation offering has been slaughtered, the priest shall take some of the blood of the reparation offering and put it on the ridge of the right ear of the one being purified, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.²⁶ The priest shall then pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand,²⁷ and with the finger of his right hand the priest shall sprinkle some of the oil that is in the palm of his left hand seven times before the LORD.²⁸ Some of the oil in his palm shall be put by the priest on the ridge of the right ear of the one being purified, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, over the same places as the blood of the reparation offering;²⁹ and what is left of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one being purified, to make expiation for him before the LORD.³⁰ He shall then offer one of the turtledoves or pigeons, depending on his means—³¹ whichever he can afford—the one as a purification offering and the other as a burnt offering, together with the grain offering. Thus the priest shall make expiation before the LORD for the one being purified.³² Such is the ritual for him who has a scaly affection and whose means for his purification are limited.

³³The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

MTZARA-AT IN BUILDING STONES
(vv. 33–53)

This section deals with some sort of mold, blight,

וְעֶשְׂרוֹן סֵלֶת אֶחָד בְּלוּל בַּשֶּׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה
וְלֹג שֶׁמֶן: ²² וּשְׁתֵּי תוֹרִים אֹו שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי יוֹנָה
אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁגִּי יָדוֹ וְהָיָה אֶחָד חֲטָאת וְהָאֶחָד
עֹלָה: ²³ וְהָבִיָּא אֹתָם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי
לְטַהֲרָתוֹ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל־מוֹעֵד
לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ²⁴ וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־כֶּבֶשׂ
הָאֵשֶׁם וְאֶת־לֹג הַשֶּׁמֶן וְהִנִּיף אֹתָם הַכֹּהֵן
תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ²⁵ וְשָׁחַט אֶת־כֶּבֶשׂ
הָאֵשֶׁם וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִדָּם הָאֵשֶׁם וְנָתַן
עַל־תֵּנוֹף אֶזְנוֹ־הַמִּטְהָר הַיְּמִנִית וְעַל־בֹּהֶן
יָדוֹ הַיְּמִנִית וְעַל־בֹּהֶן רִגְלוֹ הַיְּמִנִית:
²⁶ וּמִן־הַשֶּׁמֶן יִצֹק הַכֹּהֵן עַל־כַּף הַכֹּהֵן
הַשְּׂמָאלִית: ²⁷ וְהִזָּה הַכֹּהֵן בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ
הַיְּמִנִית מִן־הַשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל־כַּפוֹ
הַשְּׂמָאלִית שֶׁבַע פַּעֲמִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:
²⁸ וְנָתַן הַכֹּהֵן מִן־הַשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל־כַּפוֹ
עַל־תֵּנוֹף אֶזְנוֹ הַמִּטְהָר הַיְּמִנִית וְעַל־בֹּהֶן
יָדוֹ הַיְּמִנִית וְעַל־בֹּהֶן רִגְלוֹ הַיְּמִנִית עַל־
מְקוֹם דָּם הָאֵשֶׁם: ²⁹ וְהִנּוֹתָר מִן־הַשֶּׁמֶן
אֲשֶׁר עַל־כַּף הַכֹּהֵן יִתֵּן עַל־רֹאשׁ הַמִּטְהָר
לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ³⁰ וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת־
הָאֶחָד מִן־הַתּוֹרִים אֹו מִן־בְּנֵי הַיּוֹנָה
מֵאֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁגִּי יָדוֹ: ³¹ אֶת אֲשֶׁר־תִּשְׁגִּי יָדוֹ
אֶת־הָאֶחָד חֲטָאת וְאֶת־הָאֶחָד עֹלָה עַל־
הַמִּנְחָה וְכַפֵּר הַכֹּהֵן עַל הַמִּטְהָר לִפְנֵי
יְהוָה: ³² זֹאת תוֹרַת אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ נָגַע צִרְעַת
אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִשְׁגִּי יָדוֹ בְּטַהֲרָתוֹ: פ
³³ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן
לֵאמֹר:

רביעי
[שש]

or rot, perhaps of a fungoid nature, that produced
recessed lesions and discoloration in the plaster
or mud used to cover building stones.

³⁴When you enter the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession, and I inflict an eruptive plague upon a house in the land you possess, ³⁵the owner of the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, "Something like a plague has appeared upon my house." ³⁶The priest shall order the house cleared before the priest enters to examine the plague, so that nothing in the house may become impure; after that the priest shall enter to examine the house. ³⁷If, when he examines the plague, the plague in the walls of the house is found to consist of greenish or reddish streaks that appear to go deep into the wall, ³⁸the priest shall come out of the house to the entrance of the house, and close up the house for seven days. ³⁹On the seventh day the priest shall return. If he sees that the plague has spread on the walls of the house, ⁴⁰the priest shall order the stones with the plague in them to be pulled out and cast outside the city into an impure place. ⁴¹The house shall be scraped inside all around, and the coating that is scraped off shall

³⁴ כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן
לָכֶם לְאֶחְזָה וְנִתְּתִי נֹגַע צֹרְעַת בְּבַיִת
אֶרֶץ אֲחֻזְתְּכֶם: ³⁵ וּבֹא אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ הַבַּיִת
וְהִגִּיד לַכֹּהֵן לֵאמֹר כְּנֹגַע נִרְאָה לִי בַּבַּיִת:
³⁶ וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וּפָנּוּ אֶת-הַבַּיִת בְּטָרֶם יָבֹא
הַכֹּהֵן לִרְאוֹת אֶת-הַנֹּגַע וְלֹא יִטְמָא כָּל-
אֲשֶׁר בַּבַּיִת וְאַחֵר כֵּן יָבֹא הַכֹּהֵן לִרְאוֹת
אֶת-הַבַּיִת: ³⁷ וְרָאָה אֶת-הַנֹּגַע וְהִנֵּה
הַנֹּגַע בְּקִירַת הַבַּיִת שִׁקְעוֹרוֹת יִרְקָרְקֹת
אוֹ אֲדָמָדִמָּת וּמִרְאִיהֶן שָׁפֹל מִן-הַקִּיר:
³⁸ וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן מִן-הַבַּיִת אֶל-פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת
וְהִסְגִּיר אֶת-הַבַּיִת שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: ³⁹ וְשֵׁב
הַכֹּהֵן בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְרָאָה וְהִנֵּה פָשָׁה
הַנֹּגַע בְּקִירַת הַבַּיִת: ⁴⁰ וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וְחִלְצוּ
אֶת-הָאֲבָנִים אֲשֶׁר בָּהֶן הַנֹּגַע וְהִשְׁלִיכוּ
אֹתָהֶן אֶל-מְחוּץ לָעִיר אֶל-מָקוֹם טָמֵא:
⁴¹ וְאֶת-הַבַּיִת יִקְצַע מִבַּיִת סָבִיב וְשָׁפְכוּ
אֶת-הָעֹפֹר אֲשֶׁר הִקְצֹו אֶל-מְחוּץ לָעִיר

36. Once the priest arrives and quarantines the house, everything inside it becomes impure as well.

37. streaks that appear to go deep into the wall Literally, "lesions that appear to be recessed within the surface of the wall."

38. close up the house A diseased person is closed up in a house. Here, the house itself is locked up to keep people out.

39. If the lesions became enlarged, it is likely that the blight, or fungus, has penetrated to the stones themselves.

41. The mud coating is scraped off the interior facing of the rest of the stones to ascertain whether the infection had penetrated the stones themselves.

34. The appearance of *tzara-at* in the stones of a house was a mysterious event. Some Sages doubted it ever happened, and others consigned it to a distant past. Commentators consider the afflicted house (*ha-bayit ha-m'nugga*) to be a moral warning rather than a natural occurrence, even more emphatically than they consider cases of skin disease to be a moral warning. They fasten on the word for "I inflict" to deduce that this was a plague sent by God. A home is a family's private refuge. Thus a home afflicted by plague represents the breakdown of the social values that kept a family safe and united. It was a cause for concern if the problems of society at large had come to infect the home. Most commentators suggest

that the antisocial behavior that brought the plague to the house was selfishness, a blindness to the needs of others.

35. owner of the house Literally, "one whose house it is," leading the Sages to conclude that the owner sinned by saying, "the house and everything in it are mine and I don't have to share it with anyone else" (BT Yoma 11b). As punishment, the house is torn down. The Midrash pictures such owners claiming that they cannot help the poor because they are poor themselves. When their houses are dismantled, all will see what they were hoarding (Lev. R. 17:2).

40. stones . . . to be pulled out From the heart of the selfish owner.

be dumped outside the city in an impure place.

⁴²They shall take other stones and replace those stones with them, and take other coating and plaster the house.

⁴³If the plague again breaks out in the house, after the stones have been pulled out and after the house has been scraped and replastered, ⁴⁴the priest shall come to examine: if the plague has spread in the house, it is a malignant eruption in the house; it is impure. ⁴⁵The house shall be torn down—its stones and timber and all the coating on the house—and taken to an impure place outside the city.

⁴⁶Whoever enters the house while it is closed up shall be impure until evening. ⁴⁷Whoever sleeps in the house must wash his clothes, and whoever eats in the house must wash his clothes.

⁴⁸If, however, the priest comes and sees that the plague has not spread in the house after the house was replastered, the priest shall pronounce the house pure, for the plague has healed. ⁴⁹To purify the house, he shall take two birds, cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop. ⁵⁰He shall slaughter the one bird over fresh water in an earthen vessel. ⁵¹He shall take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the crimson stuff, and the live bird, and dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle on

אֶל־מָקוֹם טָמֵא: ⁴² וְלָקְחוּ אֲבָנִים אֲחֵרוֹת וְהִבִּיאוּ אֶל־תַּחַת הָאֲבָנִים וְעָפָר אַחֵר יִקַּח וְטָח אֶת־הַבַּיִת:

⁴³ וְאִם־יִשׁוּב הַנֶּגַע וּפָרַח בַּבַּיִת אַחֵר חִלָּץ אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים וְאֲחֵרֵי הַקְּצוֹת אֶת־הַבַּיִת וְאֲחֵרֵי הַטּוֹחַ: ⁴⁴ וּבֹא הַכֹּהֵן וְרָאָה וְהִנֵּה פָשָׁה הַנֶּגַע בַּבַּיִת צָרַעַת מִמֶּאֱרַת הוּא בַּבַּיִת טָמֵא הוּא: ⁴⁵ וְנָתַץ אֶת־הַבַּיִת אֶת־אֲבָנָיו וְאֶת־עֵצָיו וְאֶת כָּל־עָפָר הַבַּיִת וְהוֹצִיא אֶל־מִחוּץ לְעִיר אֶל־מָקוֹם טָמֵא:

⁴⁶ וְהָבֹא אֶל־הַבַּיִת כָּל־יְמֵי הַסִּגִּיר אֹתוֹ יִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ⁴⁷ וְהִשְׁכַּב בַּבַּיִת יִכְבֹּס אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְהָאָכַל בַּבַּיִת יִכְבֹּס אֶת־בְּגָדָיו:

⁴⁸ וְאִם־בֹּא יָבֹא הַכֹּהֵן וְרָאָה וְהִנֵּה לֹא־פָשָׁה הַנֶּגַע בַּבַּיִת אַחֲרֵי הַטּוֹחַ אֶת־הַבַּיִת וְטָהַר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַבַּיִת כִּי נִרְפָּא הַנֶּגַע: ⁴⁹ וְלָקַח לְחֹטֵא אֶת־הַבַּיִת שְׁתֵּי צִפְרִים וְעֵץ אֲרָז וּשְׁנֵי תוֹלַעַת וְאַזָּב: ⁵⁰ וְשָׁחַט אֶת־הַצִּפֹּר הָאֶחָד אֶל־כְּלִי־חֶרֶשׁ עַל־מִים חַיִּים: ⁵¹ וְלָקַח אֶת־עֵץ־הָאֲרָז וְאֶת־הָאֲזָב וְאֶת שְׁנֵי הַתּוֹלַעַת וְאֶת הַצִּפֹּר הַחַיָּה וְטָבַל אֹתָם בַּדָּם הַצִּפֹּר הַשְּׁחוּטָה וּבַמִּים הַחַיִּים וְהִזָּה אֶל־הַבַּיִת שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים:

42. take other coating and plaster the house The stones could be retained if the blight had not penetrated into them.

46–47. These verses deal with the transmission of an impurity that is present in a closed structure to people who are inside the structure while it is impure.

49. The procedures for purifying the house that has “healed,” so to speak, are almost identical to those prescribed in verses 1–32 for purifying a diseased person. There is only one difference: Oil and blood are sprinkled on a person; water and blood are sprinkled on a house.

43–45. Is the problem superficial, easily cleared up, or has it entered the structure of the institution, so that the institution is beyond saving?

The house shall be torn down The Midrash sees this as an anticipation of the destruc-

tion of Solomon’s temple, a house that will have been corrupted by the behavior of its inhabitants (Lev. R. 17:7). It then adds, “But it will not be forever, as it is stated, ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation’” (Isa. 28:16).

the house seven times. ⁵²Having purified the house with the blood of the bird, the fresh water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the crimson stuff, ⁵³he shall set the live bird free outside the city in the open country. Thus he shall make expiation for the house, and it shall be pure.

⁵⁴Such is the ritual for every eruptive affection—for scalls, ⁵⁵for an eruption on a cloth or a house, ⁵⁶for swellings, for rashes, or for discolorations—⁵⁷to determine when they are impure and when they are pure.

Such is the ritual concerning eruptions.

15 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ²Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:

When any man has a discharge issuing from his member, he is impure. ³The impurity from his discharge shall mean the following—whether his member runs with the discharge or is stopped up so that there is no discharge, his impurity means this: ⁴Any bedding on which the one with the discharge lies shall be impure, and every object on which he sits shall be im-

54–57. These verses are a postscript to the entire contents of chapters 13 and 14.

DISCHARGES FROM SEXUAL ORGANS (15:1–33)

Most of this chapter deals with discharges from the sexual organs as a result of illness or infection, not the normal menstruation of females or seminal emissions of males. Little was known about their treatment, apart from bathing, laundering clothing, and carefully observing the course taken by the ailment itself. All the impurities dealt with in this chapter, like any prevailing impurity

within the Israelite community, threatened, directly or indirectly, the purity of the sanctuary, which was located within the area of settlement.

THE ISRAELITE MALE (vv. 1–18)

2. member Hebrew: *basar* (body, flesh); here it is a euphemism for the male sex organ.

4. lies . . . sits Two sorts of objects are ren-

וְחִטָּא אֶת־הַבֵּית בְּדָם הַצִּפּוֹר וּבִמֵּי־
הַחַיִּים וּבַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיָּה וּבַעֵץ הָאֲרָז וּבְאֵזֹב
וּבִשְׂנֵי הַתּוֹלָעֹת: ⁵³וְשָׁלַח אֶת־הַצִּפּוֹר
הַחַיָּה אֶל־מְחוּץ לְעִיר אֶל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה
וּכְפָר עַל־הַבֵּית וְטָהַר:

חמישי ⁵⁴זאת התורה לכל־נגע הצרעת ולנֶתֶק:
⁵⁵ולצרעת הבגד ולבית: ⁵⁶ולשאת
ולספחת ולבהרת: ⁵⁷להורת ביום
הטמא וביום הטהר
זאת תורת הצרעת: ס

טו וידבר יהוה אל־מֹשֶׁה וְאַל־אַהֲרֹן
לֵאמֹר: ²דַּבְּרוּ אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתֶּם
אֲלֵהֶם
אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי יִהְיֶה זָב מִבְּשָׁרוֹ זָוָב טָמֵא
הוּא: ³וְזֹאת תִּהְיֶה טְמֵאתוֹ בְּזָוָבוֹ רָר
בְּשָׁרוֹ אֶת־זָוָבוֹ אוֹ־הַחֲתִים בְּשָׁרוֹ מְזֻזָּבוֹ
טְמֵאתוֹ הוּא: ⁴כָּל־הַמְּשָׁכָב אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב
עָלָיו הֵזָב יִטְמָא וְכָל־הַכֵּלִי אֲשֶׁר־יִשָּׁב

CHAPTER 15

2ff. Once again we encounter the notion of *tum-ah* not as uncleanness or contamination but as an encounter with the mysterious

life-engendering power of certain bodily fluids and with the life-endangering dimension of disease. This encounter with the primal forces of life and death rule out (or may possibly replace) other ways of entering into the divine presence.

pure. ⁵Anyone who touches his bedding shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ⁶Whoever sits on an object on which the one with the discharge has sat shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ⁷Whoever touches the body of the one with the discharge shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ⁸If one with a discharge spits on one who is pure, the latter shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ⁹Any means for riding that one with a discharge has mounted shall be impure; ¹⁰whoever touches anything that was under him shall be impure until evening; and whoever carries such things shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ¹¹If one with a discharge, without having rinsed his hands in water, touches another person, that person shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ¹²An earthen vessel that one with a discharge touches shall be broken; and any wooden implement shall be rinsed with water.

¹³When one with a discharge becomes purified of his discharge, he shall count off seven days for his purification, wash his clothes, and bathe his body in fresh water; then he shall be pure. ¹⁴On the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and come before the LORD at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and

עָלָיו יִטְמָא: ⁵וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִגַּע בְּמִשְׁכְּבוֹ יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרוּחָן בַּמֵּיִם וְיִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ⁶וְהַיֹּשֵׁב עַל-הַפִּלִּי אֲשֶׁר-יֹשֵׁב עָלָיו הֵזָב יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרוּחָן בַּמֵּיִם וְיִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ⁷*וְהַנֹּגֵעַ בְּבָשָׂר הֵזָב יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרוּחָן בַּמֵּיִם וְיִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ⁸וְכִי-יִרְקֶה הֵזָב בְּטָהוֹר וְכִבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרוּחָן בַּמֵּיִם וְיִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ⁹וְכָל-הַמְרֻכָּב אֲשֶׁר יִרְכָּב עָלָיו הֵזָב יִטְמָא: ¹⁰וְכָל-הַנֹּגֵעַ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה תַּחְתָּיו יִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב וְהַנּוֹשֵׂא אוֹתָם יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרוּחָן בַּמֵּיִם וְיִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ¹¹וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִגַּע-בּוֹ הֵזָב וְיִדְּיו לֹא-שָׁטַף בַּמֵּיִם וְכִבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרוּחָן בַּמֵּיִם וְיִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ¹²וְכָל-יֶחֱרֹשׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִגַּע-בּוֹ הֵזָב יִשְׁבֵּר וְכָל-כְּלִי-עֵץ יִשָּׁטַף בַּמֵּיִם:

¹³וְכִי-יִטְהַר הֵזָב מִזֹּבוֹ וְסָפַר לוֹ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לְטָהָרָתוֹ וְכִבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרוּחָן בְּשֶׁוֹר בַּמֵּיִם חַיִּים וְטָהַר: ¹⁴וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִקַּח-לוֹ שְׁתֵּי תֹרִים אוֹ שְׁנֵי בָנִי יוֹנָה וּבָא | לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד

v. 7. חצי הספר בפסוקים

dered impure by contact with a person who has a discharge: those on which one lies, and those on which one sits. These objects must be purified.

5. bathe in water One must bathe completely.

7. Direct contact with the affected person renders one impure.

8–9. Verses 8–9 deal with contact initiated by the affected person.

spits Spit was thought to carry infection and disease.

means for riding Hebrew: *merkav*, denoting “an object on which one rides,” such as a saddle or other appurtenance located under the rider. If

someone with a discharge rides on these objects, they become impure.

10. whoever touches anything that was under him That is, under the affected person. In this case, the impurity extends only to the body of the person who touches such objects, not to the clothing.

whoever carries such things Contact by carrying objects entails the usual severe restrictions in response.

13. seven days for his purification Seven consecutive days must pass after the termination of the ailment before ritual purification can be undertaken.

give them to the priest. ¹⁵The priest shall offer them, the one as a purification offering and the other as a burnt offering. Thus the priest shall make expiation on his behalf, for his discharge, before the LORD.

¹⁶When a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and remain impure until evening. ¹⁷All cloth or leather on which semen falls shall be washed in water and remain impure until evening. ¹⁸And if a man has carnal relations with a woman, they shall bathe in water and remain impure until evening.

¹⁹When a woman has a discharge, her discharge being blood from her body, she shall remain in her menstrual impurity seven days; whoever touches her shall be impure until evening. ²⁰Anything that she lies on during her menstrual impurity shall be impure; and anything that she sits on shall be impure. ²¹Anyone who touches her bedding shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening; ²²and anyone who touches any object on which she has sat shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ²³Be it the bedding or be it the object on which she

וַיִּתְּנֶם אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן: ¹⁵וַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הַכֹּהֵן
אֶחָד חַטָּאת וְהָאֲחֵד עֹלָה וְכָפַר עָלָיו
הַכֹּהֵן לְפָנֵי יְהוָה מִזִּבְחוֹ: ס
¹⁶וְאִישׁ כִּי-יֵצֵא מִמֶּנּוּ שִׁכְבַּת-זָרַע וְרֵחַץ
בְּמִים אֶת-כָּל-בְּשָׁרוֹ וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב:
¹⁷וְכָל-בְּגָד וְכָל-עוֹר אֲשֶׁר-יִהְיֶה עָלָיו
שִׁכְבַּת-זָרַע וְכִבֵּס בְּמִים וְטָמֵא עַד-
הָעֶרֶב: פ ¹⁸וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אִישׁ
אִתָּהּ שִׁכְבַּת-זָרַע וְרֵחַצוּ בְּמִים וְטָמְאוּ
עַד-הָעֶרֶב:

ששי
[שבועי]

¹⁹וְאִשָּׁה כִּי-תִהְיֶה זֹכָה דָּם יִהְיֶה זֹכָה
בְּבִשְׂרָהּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תִּהְיֶה בְּנִדְתָּהּ
וְכָל-הַנֹּגֵעַ בָּהּ יִטָּמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ²⁰וְכָל
אֲשֶׁר תִּשָּׁכַב עָלָיו בְּנִדְתָּהּ יִטָּמֵא וְכָל
אֲשֶׁר-תִּשָּׁב עָלָיו יִטָּמֵא: ²¹וְכָל-הַנֹּגֵעַ
בְּמִשְׁכַּבָּהּ יְכַבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרֵחַץ בְּמִים וְטָמֵא
עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ²²וְכָל-הַנֹּגֵעַ בְּכָל-כְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-
תִּשָּׁב עָלָיו יְכַבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרֵחַץ בְּמִים וְטָמֵא
עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ²³וְאִם עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּב הוּא אֹו
עַל-הַכְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-הוּא יִשְׁבַּת-עָלָיו בְּנִגְעוֹ-

15. A purification offering is required not because the person in question offended God by any act on his or her part, but because the impurity (i.e., the ailment) threatened the purity of the sanctuary.

18. Both the man and the woman are ritually impure after the sex act, and both must bathe.

THE ISRAELITE FEMALE (vv. 19–30)

The subjects of the law in this section are a woman's normal menstruation and her abnormal discharges of blood.

19. menstrual impurity Better: "menstrual condition." Hebrew: *niddah*, denoting the physiologic process of the flow of blood.

19. The enforced separation of husband and wife during her menstrual period parallels the dietary laws. Both sets of regulations inculcate holiness by introducing rules of what is permitted and what is forbidden into what

are matters of instinct for all other living creatures. Once again, the Torah defines the uniqueness of the human being as the ability to control instinct instead of being controlled by it.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

15:19. discharge being blood This and the following verses are the basis for *taharat ha-mishpahah*, the "family purity" laws that prohibit sexual contact during a woman's menstrual period until after her subsequent immersion in a *mikveh* (ritual bath). The biblical requirement for a man to immerse after a seminal emission (Lev. 15:16–17) fell into disuse by talmudic times (BT Ber. 21b–22a).

15:20. shall be impure Jewish law places no restrictions on a menstruant's touching a Torah scroll or reciting or leading prayers.

has sat, on touching it he shall be impure until evening. ²⁴And if a man lies with her, her menstrual impurity is communicated to him; he shall be impure seven days, and any bedding on which he lies shall become impure.

²⁵When a woman has had a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or when she has a discharge beyond her period of menstrual impurity, she shall be impure, as though at the time of her menstrual impurity, as long as her discharge lasts. ²⁶Any bedding on which she lies while her discharge lasts shall be for her like bedding during her menstrual impurity; and any object on which she sits shall become impure, as it does during her menstrual impurity: ²⁷whoever touches them shall be impure; he shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening.

²⁸When she becomes purified of her discharge, she shall count off seven days, and after that she shall be pure. ²⁹On the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, and bring them to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. ³⁰The priest shall offer the one as a purification offering and the other as a burnt offering; and the priest shall make expiation on her behalf, for her impure discharge, before the LORD.

³¹You shall put the Israelites on guard against their impurity, lest they die through their im-

בו יטמא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ²⁴וְאִם שָׁכַב יִשְׁכַּב אִישׁ אִתָּהּ וְתָהִי נִדְתָּהּ עָלָיו וְטָמֵא שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְכָל־הַמִּשְׁכָּב אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁכַּב עָלָיו יִטְמָא: פ

²⁵וְאִשָּׁה כִּי־יִזְוֹב זֹב דַּמָּה יָמִים רַבִּים בְּלֹא עֵת־נִדְתָּהּ אוֹ כִּי־תִזְוֹב עַל־נִדְתָּהּ כָּל־יָמֶיהָ זֹב טִמְאָתָהּ כִּימֵי נִדְתָּהּ תִּהְיֶה טִמְאָה הִוא: ²⁶כָּל־הַמִּשְׁכָּב אֲשֶׁר־תִּשְׁכַּב עָלָיו כָּל־יָמֶיהָ זֹכָה כַּמִּשְׁכָּב נִדְתָּה יִהְיֶה־לָּהּ וְכָל־הַכְּלִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשָּׁב עָלָיו טָמֵא יִהְיֶה כַּטִּמְאָת נִדְתָּה: ²⁷וְכָל־הַנוֹגֵעַ בָּם יִטְמָא וְכַבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד־הָעֶרֶב:

²⁸וְאִם־טָהְרָה מִזִּזְבָּהּ וְסָפְרָה לָּהּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְאַחֲרֵי תִטְהָר: ²⁹וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי תִקַּח־לָּהּ שְׁתֵּי תְּרִים אוֹ שְׁנֵי בָנִי יוֹנָה וְהִבִּיֵּאתָ אוֹתָם אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ³⁰וְעָשָׂה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הָאֶחָד חֲטָאת וְאֶת־הָאֶחָד עֹלָה וְכָפַר עָלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן לִפְנֵי יְהוָה מִזִּזְבָּה טִמְאָתָהּ:

³¹וְהוֹרִיתֶם אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִטִּמְאָתָם

24. he shall be impure seven days He must bathe and launder his clothing after seven days.

25. A woman who has discharges of blood not caused by menstruation bears the same impurity as a menstruating woman for as long as the discharges last.

28. Like the male in verse 13, the female must count off seven days after the termination of her abnormal discharge of blood.

29–30. This is the essential difference between abnormal and normal conditions: Abnormalities ultimately require ritual expiation as part of the purification process, whereas normal con-

ditions, though they induce impurity, require only bathing and laundering of clothing and observance of the proper period of waiting. Such normal conditions do not of themselves involve the sanctuary directly, unless a person in such a state actually enters the sacred precincts.

CONCLUSION (vv. 31–33)

31. lest they die through their impurity

It is not the condition of impurity itself that brings on God's punishment, but the failure to correct that condition so as to restore a state of purity.

purity by defiling My Tabernacle which is among them.

³²Such is the ritual concerning him who has a discharge: concerning him who has an emission of semen and becomes impure thereby, ³³and concerning her who is in menstrual infirmity, and concerning anyone, male or female, who has a discharge, and concerning a man who lies with an impure woman.

וְלֹא יִמְתּוּ בְטִמְאַתָּם בְּטִמְאַם אֶת־מִשְׁכְּנִי
אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹכָם:

³²זֹאת תֹּוֹרַת הַזֵּב וְאֲשֶׁר תֵּצֵא מִמֶּנּוּ
שְׂכִבַת־זֶרַע לְטִמְאַה־בָּהּ: ³³וְהַדִּוָּה
בְּנִדְתָּהּ וְהַזֵּב אֶת־זִוְבוֹ לְזָכָר וּלְנִקְבָּה
וּלְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב עִם־טִמְאַה: פ

31. My Tabernacle which is among them
Even when Israelites are impure, God's presence is found among them. Abravanel understands "My Tabernacle" as referring to the hu-

man body. Thus "defiling My Tabernacle" refers to rendering our bodies impure. Because each person is created in God's image, his or her body is a temple of God.

times the offerings of food due Me, as gifts of pleasing odor to Me.

³Say to them: These are the gifts that you are to present to the LORD:

As a regular burnt offering every day, two yearling lambs without blemish. ⁴You shall offer one lamb in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. ⁵And as a grain offering, there shall be a tenth of an *ephah* of choice flour with a quarter of a *hin* of beaten oil mixed in—⁶the regular burnt offering instituted at Mount Sinai—a gift of pleasing odor to the LORD.

⁷The libation with it shall be a quarter of a *hin* for each lamb, to be poured in the sacred precinct as an offering of fermented drink to the LORD. ⁸The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, preparing the same grain offering and libation as in the morning—a gift of pleasing odor to the LORD.

⁹On the sabbath day: two yearling lambs without blemish, together with two-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in as a grain offering, and with the proper libation—¹⁰a burnt offering for every sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its libation.

DAILY OFFERING (vv. 3–8)

Called “*tamid*” from biblical times on, the daily offering consisted of a burnt offering of a lamb together with its grain and wine adjuncts. It was offered twice daily, morning and evening.

3. The *tamid* offering is to be financed by all the people, not merely by the leaders or by the rich (Neh. 10:34).

4. at twilight The time between sunset and darkness.

5. ephah See Comment to Exod. 16:36.

hin See Comment to Exod. 29:40.

קָרְבָּנִי לַחֲמִי לְאִשִּׁי רִיחַ נִיחֹחַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ
לְהַקְרִיב לִי בְמוֹעֵדוֹ:

³וְאָמַרְתָּ לָהֶם זֶה הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרִיבוּ
לַיהוָה

כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם שְׁנַיִם לַיּוֹם
עֹלָה תָּמִיד: ⁴אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה
בִּבְקֹר וְאֶת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין
הָעֶרְבִים: ⁵וְעֵשִׂירִית הָאֵיפָה סֵלֶת
לְמִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בַשֶּׁמֶן פְּתִית רְבִיעֵת
הַהֵין: ⁶עֹלֹת תָּמִיד הָעֲשִׂיָּה בַהֲרָ סִינִי
לְרִיחַ נִיחֹחַ אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה:

⁷וְנִסְכּוֹ רְבִיעֵת הַהֵין לְכֶבֶשׂ הָאֶחָד בִּקְדֻשׁ
הַסֵּף נִסֵּךְ שֹׁכֵר לַיהוָה: ⁸וְאֵת הַכֶּבֶשׂ
הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים כְּמִנְחַת הַבֹּקֶר
וְכִנְסָכוֹ תַעֲשֶׂה אִשָּׁה רִיחַ נִיחֹחַ
לַיהוָה: פ

⁹וּבַיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת שְׁנֵי־כִבְשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה
תְּמִימִם וּשְׁנֵי עֲשָׂרִים סֵלֶת מִנְחָה
בְּלוּלָה בַשֶּׁמֶן וְנִסְכּוֹ: ¹⁰עֹלֹת שַׁבָּת
בְּשִׁבְתּוֹ עַל־עֹלֹת הַתָּמִיד וְנִסְכָּהּ: ס

beaten Hebrew: *katit*, “pressed in a mortar.”
Hence it was pure oil.

7. with it Refers to the lamb (v. 4, as in v. 8).

SHABBAT OFFERING (vv. 9–10)

The sacrifice for a special day, called *musaf* in Rabbinic Hebrew, is in addition to the daily *tamid* and is offered immediately after it. Because the *Shabbat* offering is the same as the *tamid*, adding *musaf* gives *Shabbat* double the number of offerings of a weekday.

10. regular burnt offering Refers to the

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28:4. in the morning . . . at twilight The Sages determined that prayer, specifically the *Amidah*, substitutes for the communal sacrifices mandated in the Torah (BT Ber. 26b). *Shaharit* and *Minḥah* (the morning and afternoon services) are thus based on the requirements articulated in this verse.

28:10. in addition to the regular burnt offering The requirement in this chapter for an additional sacrifice offered on *Shabbat*, festivals, and *Rosh Hodesh* (New Moon) is fulfilled today through the additional *Amidah* of *Musaf* recited on these days (BT Ber. 26b–27a).

¹¹On your new moons you shall present a burnt offering to the LORD: two bulls of the herd, one ram, and seven yearling lambs, without blemish. ¹²As grain offering for each bull: three-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in. As grain offering for each ram: two-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in. ¹³As grain offering for each lamb: a tenth of a measure of fine flour with oil mixed in. Such shall be the burnt offering of pleasing odor, a gift to the LORD. ¹⁴Their libations shall be: half a *hin* of wine for a bull, a third of a *hin* for a ram, and a quarter of a *hin* for a lamb. That shall be the monthly burnt offering for each new moon of the year. ¹⁵And there shall be one goat as a purification offering to the LORD, to be offered in addition to the regular burnt offering and its libation.

¹⁶In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, there shall be a passover sacrifice

וּבְרָאשֵׁי חֳדָשֵׁיכֶם תִּקְרִיבוּ עֹלָה לַיהוָה ¹¹
פָּרִים בְּנֵי־בָקָר שְׁנָיִם וְאַיִל אֶחָד כְּבָשִׂים
בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה שִׁבְעָה תְּמִימִם: ¹²וּשְׁלֹשָׁה
עֶשְׂרֹנִים סֶלֶת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לַפָּר
הָאֶחָד וּשְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרֹנִים סֶלֶת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה
בְּשֶׁמֶן לְאַיִל הָאֶחָד: ¹³וְעֶשְׂרֹן עֶשְׂרֹן
סֶלֶת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְכָבֶשׂ הָאֶחָד
עֹלָה רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ אֲשֶׁה לַיהוָה: ¹⁴וְנִסְכֵּיהֶם
חֲצִי הַהֵין יִהְיֶה לַפָּר וּשְׁלִישֶׁת הַהֵין
לְאַיִל וּרְבִיעֶת הַהֵין לְכָבֶשׂ יַיִן זֹאת עֹלַת
חֹדֶשׁ בַּחֹדֶשׁ לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה: ¹⁵וּשְׁעִיר
עֲזִים אֶחָד לַחֲטָאת לַיהוָה עַל־עֹלַת
הַתָּמִיד יַעֲשֶׂה וְנִסְכּוֹ: ס

וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם ¹⁶שִׁשִּׁי

morning *tamid*, because there could be no offering after the *tamid* of the evening. It should be noted that purification sacrifices are never brought on *Shabbat*, because intimations of human wrongdoing are not permitted on this joyous day.

ROSH HODESH, THE NEW MOON (vv. 11–15)

In early Israel, this was an important festival celebrated by families and clans in a state of ritual purity at the local sanctuary.

14. Only here are the libation quantities

specified. Because they are always the same, they need not be repeated.

burnt offering Use of this term implies the auxiliary grain offering and libation.

new moon Hebrew: *hodesh*, “new moon,” as in 29:6. (The word can also mean “month.”)

PASCHAL SACRIFICE AND UNLEAVENED BREAD (vv. 16–25)

The day of the paschal offering and the seven-day Festival of Unleavened Bread originally were separate and distinct holidays (cf. Lev. 23:5–6). The fact that the paschal offering is mentioned here

15. purification offering to the LORD Hebrew: *hattat l’Adonai*. Noting that this is the only place in the Torah where this phrase occurs, the Talmud understands it to mean “a purification offering for the LORD.” It is brought on God’s behalf on *Rosh Hodesh* (when the new moon appears) as an apology to the moon for having made it smaller and less consequential

than the sun (BT Hul. 60b). Did the Sages here picture God apologizing for all the unfairness of life—to people who are born less healthy, gifted, or fortunate than others? Given the traditional identification of *Rosh Hodesh* as a woman’s festival, did the Sages imagine God expressing regret to women for having a less prominent role than men for so much of history?

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28:11. new moons The Jewish calendar is based on the cycles of the moon. An extra month (Adar I) is added 7 times in 19 years to make the lunar calendar conform to the solar year. Each Hebrew month begins with the New Moon (*Rosh Hodesh*); it is announced in synagogue (except for the month of *Tishrei*) on the preceding *Shabbat*, in the Blessing of the Month (*Birkat Ha-Hodesh*). See Comment on Exod. 12:2.

הפטרה לשבת וראש חודש

HAFTARAH FOR SHABBAT AND ROSH HODESH

ISAIAH 66:1–24

This *haftarah* is a compilation of oracles of judgment and salvation. Its reference to building a new temple (Isa. 66:1) situates it in the period after the Judean exiles in Babylon had been granted permission to return to their homeland by Cyrus the Mede in 538 B.C.E.

The diverse prophecies of this *haftarah* are unified by a symmetrical structure. Two frames enclose a centerpiece of consolation for Zion. Beginning with the outermost frame, at the outset (66:1) God proclaims His omnipresent majesty throughout heaven and earth—and thus no earthly temple can contain Him. At the end, this theme is balanced by another reference to heaven and earth; there, they comprise God's new Creation as a sign and token of Israel's permanence (v. 22), followed by the ingathering of all nations to the rebuilt temple (v. 23). What began as a negative (mortals' inability to build a temple for God, due to His utter transcendence) concludes with a positive expectation of temple worship by "all flesh," announced and guaranteed by God.

Within this framework, whose theme is the worship of God the Creator, lies a second theme: God's direct involvement with the world. Divine acts of judgment against those who reject God and perform improper rites (vv. 3–6, 15–17) stand in stark contrast to the center of the *haftarah* and its themes of divine grace and human joy (vv. 7–14). Zion shall bear her children without pain, with God's help in the role of a beneficent midwife who enables labor and easy birth (v. 9). This feminine focus extends to God's acts of care for the nation, giving it comfort "as a mother comforts her son" (v. 13). Such divine imagery balances attributes of justice with attributes of mercy for the faithful. Punishment and nurturance are the theological signs of the new age. For the sinner

this means death, but for the favored of God birth and life form a horizon of hope.

The theme of universal worship is also featured (vv. 18b–21, 23). This is particularly evident in the polemical inclusion of foreigners in the service of the temple (v. 21). Such a dramatic inclusiveness surpasses other universalist visions found in Scripture.

RELATION OF THE *HAFTARAH* TO THE CALENDAR

In antiquity, special public rituals and feasts marked the occasion of the new moon (Num. 28:11–15, M RH 2:5), while private feasts were celebrated (1 Sam. 9:13). In an early medieval *midrash*, God designated the New Moon festival especially for women, as a reward for not having contributed their jewelry in the making of the Golden Calf (see Exod. 32:3; PdRE 45).

This *haftarah* announces that when the people Israel are gathered in from exile "all flesh shall come to worship" the Lord "new moon after new moon" (66:23). Therewith, new moon rites are given a universalist dimension. In anticipation of that celebration in Jerusalem at the end of days, this prophecy is traditionally recited when the New Moon (*Rosh Hodesh*) falls on *Shabbat*. The monthly renewal of light in the heavens embodies the hope for light and fellowship on earth.

Meanwhile, according to medieval mystical tradition, the moon's waxing and waning reflect the increase and the decrease of holiness and unity in both the divine and human realms. As the moon is not the source of its own light, the symbolism of the new moon invites worshippers to deepen receptivity to a "higher," hidden radiance—so that each individual may be con-

nected to a divine dimension and reflect it outward through the self. In this respect, the *haftarah* for *Rosh Hodesh* reminds the single self of its commonality with all creatures. Proclamation of the

celebration of God by “all flesh . . . new moon after new moon,” is thus a prophecy of a unified humanity that is constantly renewed.

66 Thus said the LORD:

The heaven is My throne
And the earth is My footstool:
Where could you build a house for Me,
What place could serve as My abode?
²All this was made by My hand,
And thus it all came into being
—declares the LORD.

Yet to such a one I look:
To the poor and brokenhearted,
Who is concerned about My word.

³As for those who slaughter oxen and slay humans,
Who sacrifice sheep and immolate dogs,
Who present as oblation the blood of swine,
Who offer incense and worship false gods—
Just as they have chosen their ways
And take pleasure in their abominations,
⁴So will I choose to mock them,
To bring on them the very thing they dread.
For I called and none responded,
I spoke and none paid heed.
They did what I deem evil
And chose what I do not want.

⁵Hear the word of the LORD,

סו כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה
הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּסֵּאִי
וְהָאָרֶץ רִגְלִי
אֵי-יָה בֵּית אֲשֶׁר תִּבְנוּ-לִי
וְאֵי-יָה מְקוֹם מִנוּחָתִי:
²וְאֶת-כָּל-אֱלֹהֵי יָדֵי עֲשֵׂתָהּ
וַיְהִי כָל-אֱלֹהֵי
נֶאֱמַר-יְהוָה
וְאֶל-יָה אֲבִיט
אֶל-עֲנִי וְנֹכַח-רוּחַ
וְחָרַד עַל-דִּבְרֵי:

³שׁוֹחֵט הַשּׁוֹר מִכֶּה-אִישׁ
זוֹבֵחַ הַשֶּׁה עֶרְף כָּלֵב
מַעֲלֶה מִנְחָה דַם-חֲזִיר
מִזְבִּיר לְבָנָה מְבַרֵּךְ אֹן
גַּם-הֵמָּה בָּחֲרוּ בְּדַרְכֵיהֶם
וּבִשְׁקוּצֵיהֶם נִפְשָׁם חִפְצָה:
⁴גַּם-אֲנִי אֲבַחַר בְּתַעֲלָלֵיהֶם
וּמִגִּוְרָתָם אֲבִיא לָהֶם
יַעַן קָרָאתִי וְאֵין עֹנָה
דִּבַּרְתִּי וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ
וַיַּעֲשׂוּ הָרַע בְּעֵינַי
וּבְאֲשֶׁר לֹא-חִפְצָתִי בָּחֲרוּ: ס

⁵שְׁמַעוּ דִּבְרֵי-יְהוָה

Isaiah 66:1. The image of the heavens as God’s throne and the earth as His footstool is one of divine transcendence above and beyond the created world and divine omnipresence within it.

2. Who is concerned about My word Designating the faithful as “concerned” (*hared*) may

reflect a technical term of the period. The ensuing reference to “all who mourned” (*mit-ab’lim*) over Jerusalem (v. 10) may also have technical overtones, because this group is called “the mourners in [or: of] Zion” (*avelei Tziyyon*) in Isa. 61:3.

You who are concerned about His word!
 Your kinsmen who hate you,
 Who spurn you because of Me, are saying,
 "Let the LORD manifest His Presence,
 So that we may look upon your joy."
 But theirs shall be the shame.
⁶Hark, tumult from the city,
 Thunder from the Temple!
 It is the thunder of the LORD
 As He deals retribution to His foes.

⁷Before she labored, she was delivered;
 Before her pangs came, she bore a son.
⁸Who ever heard the like?
 Who ever witnessed such events?
 Can a land pass through travail
 In a single day?
 Or is a nation born
 All at once?
 Yet Zion travailed
 And at once bore her children!
⁹Shall I who bring on labor not bring about
 birth?

—says the LORD.

Shall I who cause birth shut the womb?

—said your God.

¹⁰Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her,
 All you who love her!
 Join in her jubilation,
 All you who mourned over her—
¹¹That you may suck from her breast
 Consolation to the full,
 That you may draw from her bosom
 Glory to your delight.

¹²For thus said the LORD:

הַחֲרָדִים אֶל־דְּבָרוֹ
 אָמְרוּ אֲחֵיכֶם שְׂנְאֵיכֶם
 מְנַדִּיכֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמִי
 יִכְבֹּד יְהוָה
 וְנִרְאָה בְּשִׂמְחַתְכֶם
 וְהֵם יִבְשׁוּ:
⁶קוֹל שָׁאוֹן מֵעִיר
 קוֹל מִהֵיכַל
 קוֹל יְהוָה
 מִשָּׁלֹם גָּמוּל לְאֹיְבָיו:

⁷בְּטֶרֶם תַּחֲוִיל יִלְדָּה
 בְּטֶרֶם יָבֹוא חֶבֶל לָהּ וְהַמְלִיטָה זָכָר:
⁸מִי־שָׁמַע בְּזֹאת
 מִי רָאָה כָּאֵלֶּה
 הַיּוֹחֵל אֶרֶץ
 בְּיוֹם אֶחָד
 אִם־יּוֹלֵד גּוֹי
 פֶּעַם אַחַת
 כִּי־חָלָה גַם־יִלְדָּה צִיּוֹן
 אֶת־בְּנֵיהָ:

⁹הֲאֲנִי אֲשַׁבֵּיר וְלֹא אוֹלִיד
 יֹאמַר *יְהוָה
 אִם־אֲנִי הַמוֹלִיד וְעַצְרָתִי
 אָמַר אֱלֹהֵיךָ: ^ס

¹⁰שִׂמְחוּ אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם
 וְגִילוּ בָּהּ כָּל־אֲהֻבֶיהָ
 שִׁישׁוּ אֶתָּה מְשׁוֹשׁ
 כָּל־הַמִּתְאַבְּלִים עָלֶיהָ:
¹¹לְמַעַן תִּינָקוּ וּשְׂבַעְתֶּם
 מִשֹּׂד תִּנְחַמְתֶּם
 לְמַעַן תִּמְצְאוּ וְהִתְעַנְּגְתֶּם
 מִזֵּיז בְּבוֹדָה: ^ס

¹²כִּי־כֵן | אָמַר יְהוָה

I will extend to her
Prosperity like a stream,
The wealth of nations
Like a wadi in flood;
And you shall drink of it.
You shall be carried on shoulders
And dandled upon knees.

¹³As a mother comforts her son
So I will comfort you;
You shall find comfort in Jerusalem.
¹⁴You shall see and your heart shall rejoice,
Your limbs shall flourish like grass.
The power of the LORD shall be revealed
In behalf of His servants;
But He shall rage against His foes.

¹⁵See, the LORD is coming with fire—
His chariots are like a whirlwind—
To vent His anger in fury,
His rebuke in flaming fire.
¹⁶For with fire will the LORD contend,
With His sword, against all flesh;
And many shall be the slain of the LORD.

¹⁷Those who sanctify and purify themselves
to enter the groves, imitating one in the cen-
ter, eating the flesh of the swine, the reptile, and
the mouse, shall one and all come to an
end—declares the LORD. ¹⁸For I [know] their
deeds and purposes.

[The time] has come to gather all the nations
and tongues; they shall come and behold My
glory. ¹⁹I will set a sign among them, and send
from them survivors to the nations: to Tarshish,
Pul, and Lud—that draw the bow—to Tubal,
Javan, and the distant coasts, that have never

הִנְנִי נֹטֶה-אֵלֶיהָ
כְּנַהַר שְׁלֹום
וּכְנַחַל שׁוֹטֵף
כְּכֹד גּוֹיִם וַיִּנְקֹתֶם
עַל-צֶדֶל תִּנְשְׂאוּ
וְעַל-בְּרָכִים
תִּשְׁעֲשְׂעוּ:

¹³ כְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אִמּוֹ תִנְחַמֶּנּוּ
כֵּן אֲנִכִּי אֲנַחֲמֶכֶם
וּבִירוּשָׁלַם תִּנְחַמוּ:
¹⁴ וּרְאִיתֶם וְשֵׁשׁ לִבְכֶּם
וְעֲצָמוֹתֵיכֶם כִּדְשָׁא תִפְרַחְנָה
וְנוֹדַעַה יְד־יְהוָה
אֶת-עַבְדָּיו
וְזַעַם אֶת-אֹיְבָיו:

¹⁵ כִּי-יִהְיֶה יְהוָה בָּאֵשׁ יָבוֹא
וּכְסוּפָה מִרְפַּבְתָּיו
לְהַשִּׁיב בַּחֲמָה אָפוֹ
וּגְעַרְתּוֹ בְּלֹהֲבֵי-אֵשׁ:
¹⁶ כִּי בָאֵשׁ יִהְיֶה נִשְׁפָּט
וּבְחָרְבוֹ אֶת-כָּל-בָּשָׂר
וְרַבּוֹ חָלָלִי יְהוָה:

¹⁷ הַמְתַּקְדָּשִׁים וְהַמְטַהֲרִים אֶל-הַגִּזְזוֹת
אַחֵר אַחֵר אַחַת בַּתְּנוּף אֲכָלִי בֶשֶׂר הַחֲזִיר
וְהַשֶּׁקֶץ וְהָעֶכְבֵּר יַחְדוֹ יִסְפוּ נְאֻם-יְהוָה:
¹⁸ וְאַנֹכִי מַעֲשִׂיהֶם וּמַחֲשַׁבְתֵּיהֶם

בָּאָה לְקַבֵּץ אֶת-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם וְהַלְשֹׁנוֹת
וּבָאוּ וָרָאוּ אֶת-כְּבוֹדִי: ¹⁹ וְשַׁמְתִּי בָהֶם
אוֹת וּשְׁלַחְתִּי מֵהֶם פְּלִיטִים אֶל-הַגּוֹיִם
תַּרְשִׁישׁ פּוּל וְלֹד מִשְׁכֵּי קָשֶׁת תִּבְל וַיּוֹן

18–21. A universal ingathering of nations is flected in the earlier chapters of the book as well prophesied here. This attitude is characteristic of (Isa. 2:1–4). this postexilic prophet (cf. 56:1–8, 60), but is re-

heard My fame nor beheld My glory. They shall declare My glory among these nations. ²⁰And out of all the nations, said the LORD, they shall bring all your brothers on horses, in chariots and drays, on mules and dromedaries, to Jerusalem My holy mountain as an offering to the LORD—just as the Israelites bring an offering in a pure vessel to the House of the LORD. ²¹And from them likewise I will take some to be levitical priests, said the LORD.

²²For as the new heaven and the new earth
Which I will make
Shall endure by My will
—declares the LORD—

So shall your seed and your name endure.

²³And new moon after new moon,
And sabbath after sabbath,
All flesh shall come to worship Me
—said the LORD.

²⁴They shall go out and gaze
On the corpses of the men who rebelled
against Me:
Their worms shall not die,
Nor their fire be quenched;
They shall be a horror
To all flesh.

And new moon after new moon,
And sabbath after sabbath,
All flesh shall come to worship Me
—said the LORD.

הָאֵיִם הָרְחֹקִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֶת־
שְׁמִיעִי וְלֹא־רָאוּ אֶת־כְּבוֹדִי וְהִגִּידוּ אֶת־
כְּבוֹדִי בְּגוֹיִם: ²⁰ וְהֵבִיאוּ אֶת־כָּל־אֲחֵיכֶם
מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם | מִנָּחָה | לִיהוָה בְּסוּסִים
וּבָרֶכֶב וּבַצִּבִּיִּים וּבַפָּרָדִּים וּבַפָּרָכָוִת עַל
הָרִ קִדְשֵׁי יְרוּשָׁלַם אָמַר יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר
יָבִיאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה בְּכֵלִי
טָהוֹר בֵּית יְהוָה: ²¹ וְגַם־מֵהֶם אֶקַּח
לַכֹּהֲנִים לְלוֹיִם אָמַר יְהוָה:

²² כִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר הַשָּׁמַיִם הַחֲדָשִׁים וְהָאָרֶץ
הַחֲדָשָׁה

אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה

עֲמִידִים לִפְנֵי

נְאֻם־יְהוָה

בְּן יַעֲמֹד זֶרַעְכֶם וְשִׁמְכֶם:

²³ וְהָיָה מִדֵּי־חֹדֶשׁ בַּחֲדָשׁוֹ

וּמִדֵּי שַׁבָּת בְּשַׁבָּתוֹ

יָבוֹא כָּל־בָּשָׂר לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לִפְנֵי

אָמַר יְהוָה:

²⁴ וַיֵּצְאוּ וַרְאוּ

בַּפִּגְרֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים הַפְּשָׁעִים בִּי

כִּי תוֹלַעְתָּם לֹא תָמוּת

וְאִשָּׁם לֹא תִכָּבֵּה

וְהָיוּ דְרָאוֹן

לְכָל־בָּשָׂר:

[וְהָיָה מִדֵּי־חֹדֶשׁ בַּחֲדָשׁוֹ

וּמִדֵּי שַׁבָּת בְּשַׁבָּתוֹ

יָבוֹא כָּל־בָּשָׂר לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לִפְנֵי

אָמַר יְהוָה: *]

end. במסורת הקריאה נשנה הפסוק לפני האחרון

21. said the LORD Rashi understood this prophetic signature to mean that the daring innovation envisioned here for the days to come (inclusion of foreigners in the service of the temple)

is a divine mystery of God, which had been stated long before. He referred to Deut 29:28, "Concealed acts concern the LORD our God."