

# Triennial Torah Study – 2<sup>nd</sup> Year 11/02/2012

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<https://sightedmoon.com/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf>

<b>Lev 15</b>	<b>Jer 52</b>	<b>Prov 27-28</b>	<b>Acts 24</b>
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## Leviticus 15 (same as last week)

Laws Regulating Disease and Bodily Discharges (Leviticus 13-15)

Modern leprosy, also called Hansen's disease, is, according to Mosby's Medical, Nursing, & Allied Health Dictionary, a "chronic, communicable disease... that may take either of two forms, depending on the immunity of the host. Tuberculoid leprosy, seen in those with high resistance, presents as thickening of [skin] nerves and [insensitive], saucer-shaped lesions. Lepromatous leprosy, seen in those with little resistance, involves many systems of the body, with widespread [deposits forming hardening] and [small lumps] in the skin, [eye inflammation], [corneal inflammation], destruction of nasal cartilage and bone, testicular atrophy, [swelling of extremities], and involvement of the [immune] system. Blindness may result. Death is rare unless... tuberculosis [or a related illness] occurs concurrently. Contrary to traditional belief, leprosy is not very contagious, and prolonged, intimate contact is required for it to be spread between individuals" (4th ed., "Leprosy").

Still, it is contagious nonetheless. As the Encyclopaedia Britannica states in its article on the disease: "The prevention of leprosy rests upon the recognition of bacteriologically positive cases so that they may be isolated and treated" (1985, Vol. 7, p. 287). And this is quite biblical. While treatment is not emphasized in Leviticus, the priests, as medical control officers, were to diagnose individuals and then take action to protect the community from further infection—by isolating those displaying the disease's symptoms.

It may even be that the "leprosy" identified in Leviticus 13-14 was far more communicable than the modern disease of that name. "There is some debate among medical scholars about whether the Hebrew word translated 'leprosy' in the Bible is exactly the same disease as the modern variant. It may have been another deadly infectious disease that differs from modern forms of leprosy" (Grant Jeffrey, *The Signature of God: Astonishing Biblical Discoveries*, 1996,

p. 147). Indeed, The Nelson Study Bible notes on the word "leprous" in Leviticus 13:2, "Hebrew saraath, disfiguring skin diseases, including leprosy." So there may have been an immediate concern about a very infectious disease at the time God inspired Moses to write Leviticus.

Of course, it is also possible that the leprosy of the time was the same as today. In that case, God may have simply been instituting a general way of dealing with communicable illness—that is, quarantine. In any case, He was also illustrating the need for removing spiritual uncleanness by the lesson of such physical separation—and made this even clearer by certain ritual or ceremonial ordinances. "Leprosy" on house walls and garments, it should be

pointed out, was almost certainly “decomposition by mildew, mold, dry rot, etc.” (Nelson Study Bible, note on 14:34)—spreading fungus. “All of these were harmful growths, whether on human skin, clothing, or the wall of a house.”

It is especially interesting to read the requirements of shaving and washing in water. Incredibly, the idea of microscopic germs passing on illness, which Leviticus seems to take for granted, was not even generally believed in until very modern times. Indeed, Ignaz Semmelweis, a Hungarian doctor, was ridiculed by the entire medical establishment in the mid-1800s for instituting handwashing before examining patients—as if there were some invisible infectious agents to be worried about. Thankfully, his notion eventually caught on—but not until many died unnecessarily and until he died as well, following decades of rejection that, sadly, drove him into a mental institution (Jeffrey, pp. 145-146, from S.I. McMillen, *None of These Diseases*).

Yet consider the time during which Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Ancient Egyptian medical knowledge was primitive compared to that of the 1800s. It is obvious from the Papyrus Ebers manuscript and other ancient sources that there was no sense of sanitation in Egypt whatsoever. For instance, dung, from many different animals, was a primary ointment ingredient for all manner of ailments. The ancient laws of the Israelites, on the other hand, show nothing but concern for sanitation. They would have protected against microscopic pathogens. Yet how could Moses have known of the existence of such germs? The Egyptians certainly did not—nor did any other ancient culture.

In fact, “until this century, all previous societies, except for the Israelites who followed God’s medical laws regarding quarantine, kept infected patients in their homes—even after death, exposing family members and others to deadly disease. During the devastating Black Death [or bubonic plague] of the fourteenth century, patients who were sick or dead were kept in the same rooms as the rest of the family. People often wondered why the disease [which killed half of Europe and seemed unstoppable] was affecting so many people at one time. They attributed these epidemics to ‘bad air’ or ‘evil spirits.’ However, careful attention to the medical commands of God as revealed in Leviticus would have saved untold millions of lives. Arturo Castiglione wrote about the overwhelming importance of this biblical medical law, ‘The laws against leprosy in Leviticus 13 may be regarded as the first model of a sanitary legislation’ (Arturo Castiglione, *A History of Medicine...* 1941, p. 71). Fortunately, the church fathers of Vienna finally took the biblical injunctions to heart and commanded that those infected with the plague... be placed outside the city in special medical quarantine compounds. Care givers fed them until they either died or survived the passage of the disease. Those who died in homes or streets were instantly removed and buried outside the city limits. These biblical sanitary measures quickly brought the dreaded epidemic under control for the first time. Other cities and countries rapidly followed the medical practices of Vienna until the Black Death was finally halted” (Jeffrey, pp. 149-150).

No, Moses simply could not have understood the need to institute such laws through the natural means available to him at the time. But the Creator God did understand. And in commanding that His instructions for handling such situations be preserved in the Bible, the Eternal has given us one more amazing proof that this wonderful book is truly His inspired Word.

## **Jeremiah 52**

The fall of King Zedekiah. He began his reign at twenty-one years of age and we are told the name of his mother, Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. This is not the prophet Jeremiah. Zedekiah did evil in the eyes of Jehovah according to all that Jahoiakim did. He rebelled against Nebukadrestsar and Babel following his

placement by him as governor of Jerusalem. So Nebukadrestsar came against Zedekiah and encamped around the city of

Jerusalem with all his army. This happened in the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah. The Babylonian army built a siege wall against the city. The city remained under siege until the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, amounting to two years.

The scarcity of food became severe such that there was “no food in the city for people to eat.” Eventually the wall of the city was breached by the Babylonian army, and the men of battle of the city of Jerusalem fled. These men, along with the King, sneaked out of the city by night near the garden of the King. The Chaldean army was throughout the city and eventually tracked down Zedekiah and his men and overtook them in the desert plains of Jericho. Zedekiah was brought to the sovereign of Babel and he was judged. The king of Babel slew the sons of Zedekiah and all the heads of Judah right in front of him. Zedekiah was blinded by having his eyes put out and was taken in bronze shackles to Babel and imprisoned until the day of his death.

Nebuzaradan, who was chief of the guard of Babel, was sent to Jerusalem to burn the House of Yehovah, the King’s house, and all of Jerusalem. Some of the poor were exiled, and some were left in the city. Some of the poor who were left in the city were used by the King of Babel to work the land to produce grapes and to farm the land. The army had destroyed everything; all the gold pillars of the temple, the brazen laver, and took all of the temple utensils and took them to Babylon. We are told of the specifics concerning the two columns to the temple, the two capitols of bronze. Nobles of all offices were taken out of the city and were put to death by Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah.

There were three different exiles performed upon Judah by the King of Babylon. In his seventh year of reign, three thousand and twenty-three, in the eighteenth year: eight hundred and thirty-two, and the in the twenty-third year: seven hundred and forty-five Yahudim.

## **Proverb 27**

First Part of Hezekiah’s Solomonic Collection Cont’d (Proverbs 27)

### 12. Boasting and Praise (27:1-2)

“TYPE: CATCHWORD....These two proverbs both begin with the same verbal root [the words translated “boast” and “praise” both coming from the Hebrew *halal*]. Behind both is the contrast between arrogance and humility....The two verses together espouse an attitude of humility before the sovereignty of God and the judgment of the community” (NAC). Proverbs 27:1 is alluded to in James 4:13-16, where planning for the near future without taking into consideration unexpected circumstances that God may allow or bring to pass is referred to as arrogant and evil boasting.

### 13. Unbearable Personalities (27:3-4)

“TYPE: THEMATIC, GRAMMATICAL PARALLEL....These two proverbs strongly parallel each other in the Hebrew. Both concern behavior that cannot be endured” (NAC). As noted in our introduction to Proverbs, the wording of verse 3 about fools being heavy?i.e., hard to bear?is similar to a saying written later about grief in the Assyrian “Words of Ahiqar”: “I have lifted sand, and I have carried salt; but there is naught which is heavier than {grief}” (quoted in Expositor’s, introduction to Proverbs).

### 14. Honest Friendship (27:5-6)

“TYPE: THEMATIC, CATCHWORD....In addition to a common catchword [the Hebrew root meaning ‘love’], both verses concern the nature of genuine friendship” (NAC)?which is characterized by openness and honesty, including

rebuking the friend if necessary for his own good. This is contrasted with hidden love (being too timid to be frank, more concerned with oneself being rejected rather than the welfare of the other person) and with an enemy's deceptive show of affection.

#### 15. Real Friends, Close at Hand (27:7-10)

"TYPE: PARALLEL....The four verses are arranged in parallel (A B A B) and generally concern forming significant friendships. Verses 7 and 9 both deal with pleasant substances (honey, incense, oil) and the paradox that what may seem bitter (bitter food or direct advice) can actually be sweet. Verse 8 decries the man who wanders far from home while verse 10 urges the reader to cultivate neighbors [near at hand] as friends to whom one can go in time of crisis [rather than relatives far away]" (NAC). By itself, verse 7 would seem to point out merely that those with much (in the way of good food or perhaps luxuries in general) get sick of it, no longer appreciating what they have, while a person with little delights in whatever he is able to get. Yet in context of the preceding and following verses the proverb could also refer to friendship and counsel?perhaps a caution to be sparing in friendly advice, lest the recipient grow tired of it.

#### 16. Fatherly Advice (27:11-27)

"TYPE: THEMATIC....Verse 11 is a fatherly plea for the son to heed wisdom similar to those that begin lengthy exhortations in Prov 1?9. If v. 11 does form a heading to a series of paternal teachings here (and is not just an interjection with no following material), one may ask how much of what follows may be placed under this heading. It is perhaps significant that vv. 12-27 for the most part concern matters about which a father might naturally teach his son: sound business practices and skills in dealing with men in the community" (NAC).

The first two proverbs here are nearly identical to proverbs in Solomon's major collection (compare 27:12 with 22:3 and 27:13 with 20:16).

Proverbs 27:14 gives further counsel on friendship (in a similar vein to 25:20). A show of friendliness without proper social sensitivities can be obnoxious. Speaking of obnoxious, the following verse, 27:15, compares a nagging or argumentative wife to a constant dripping?as in

19:13. The next verse, 27:16, must accompany the previous one as it would be incomprehensible on its own. It is commonly understood to mean that a contentious wife is also uncontrollable?like trying to stop the wind or keep oil from slipping through one's fingers.

However, the Hebrew of the verse is difficult and the translation not certain.

The point of verse 17 about iron sharpening iron (e.g., an iron file on an ax head) is that friends are "sharpened" (made more effective in various ways) through close interaction with one another. This includes the rebuke and hearty counsel mentioned in verses 5-6 and 9.

Verse 18 concerns a servant or employee looking after his master or employer's estate or business and receiving livelihood and honor from that source (symbolized by the fig tree). Ultimately, this would apply to the blessings and future reward of God's servants for being faithful stewards in the work He has entrusted them with.

Verse 19 is subject to various interpretations. "The Hebrew could be more literally rendered, 'Like the water, the face to the face, so the heart of the man to the man'" (NAC). The NKJV rendering of the second colon makes more sense if reversed, as we cannot see men's hearts. The meaning would be that a man's heart is revealed by the man?that is, the man (what we see of him, what he says and what he does) reveals what is in his heart.

The word "hell" in verse 20 is translated from the Hebrew sheol, meaning "grave." A comparison is made here that is also a warning. As the grave and destruction are never full? being pictured as ravenous monsters that never seem

to get enough since people continue to die and meet destruction (compare 30:16)?so the eyes of man, representing his covetous desires, are never satisfied. In the parallel, besides covetous being voracious, we may note that “the avaricious appetite of humans is compared to that which destroys” (NIV Application Commentary, note on verses 19-20). Thus the proverb may imply not only that people are greedy, but that having greedy eyes leads to the devouring of others and eventually the self.

The first line of verse 21 is identical to 17:3. In the previous verse the focus on the crucible concerned the refining process?compared to God’s refining of people’s character. Here the focus is on what the refining process reveals?the pure metals?the comparison being with the revealing of a man’s character by what people say of him. Of course, we must consider this in general terms. The righteous may well experience public censure over issues of righteousness (see Matthew 5:11), though some will nonetheless take note of good character (compare 1 Peter 2:12). Indeed, if we inquire of the right people about someone (those of good character who know the person in question), we are likely to gain a proper assessment.

Verse 22 contains another metaphor of processing natural materials?mortar and pestle rather than crucible. The point is that fools cannot be separated from their foolishness?showing the importance of being careful in choosing one’s associates.

Unlike the preceding short proverbs, verses 23-27 constitute an extended poem. The message here, though couched in pastoral terms, can be generally applied to one’s means of earning a living. “Take care of your business, and it will take care of you” (NAC). This is the reward for diligence.

## **Proverb 28**

Second Part of Hezekiah Collection Mostly Antithetical (Proverbs 28:1-11)

As earlier noted in regard to the Hezekiah collection of Solomonic proverbs (Proverbs 25?29), the first part (25?27) contains mostly synonymous proverbs, while the second part (28?29), which we are now reading, contains mostly antithetical proverbs contrasting the righteous with the wicked.

### **17. A Life of Fear (28:1)**

“TYPE: INDIVIDUAL PROVERB” (NAC). This verse speaks of one’s way of life determining his mental outlook. The wicked, some afflicted by a guilty conscience and fearing consequences and others just chalking life up to whim and chance, live with uncertainty and perhaps even paranoia. The righteous, on the other hand, knowing that God is ultimately in charge and that they are in His care, face life with faith and confidence.

### **18. Civil Unrest Evil Causes vs. Righteous Stability (28:2)**

“TYPE: INDIVIDUAL PROVERB” (NAC). Most commentators take many rulers here as a reference to a succession of many rulers?one after the other?over a short time due to a period of political instability. This certainly happened to Israel and Judah because of unrighteousness. Some, however, see the rulers here as many governors or overlords ruling simultaneously, increasing the burden on the people?the idea being bloated government. Since the contrast is with justice being prolonged?as a mark of stability?the former explanation seems to fit better.

### **19. Oppression, Keeping in the Right Way, and the Law (28:3-11)**

“TYPE: PARALLEL....These verses set up a parallel with an extra verse on the law in the middle of the parallel, as follows:

The language of the first line of verse 3 is disputed. The New King James presents “a poor man who oppresses the poor.” Others contend that this should be translated “A poor man and one who oppresses the poor.” Alternatively,

the line could perhaps mean that a man is poor who oppresses the poor. This would fit the imagery of the second line—a driving rain that leaves no crops. Consider a landlord or employer oppressing his workers so much that they cease to produce for him—or big businesses or abusive governments extorting from the common people to the point that the people can no longer buy enough goods or pay sufficient taxes to support the economy or government. This corresponds to verse 8, which says that the person who abuses others financially is gathering not ultimately for himself but for those who will treat the poor properly. That is, those who treat the poor well are the ones who will end up with all the material blessings in the end. To some extent, this is true during this lifetime, but in an ultimate sense it applies to the inheritance of the righteous at the end of the age.

Verse 6 is one of the proverbs of Hezekiah's Solomonic collection that are very similar in meaning to verses in the major Solomonic collection (see 19:1).

The next verse, 28:7, warning that a companion of gluttons shames his father, recalls 23:20-25 from the Words of the Wise.

Proverbs 28:9 says that if people won't listen to God, then He won't listen to them. Indeed, their prayer is an arrogant affront to Him. He considers it loathsome—just as He looks on their other displays of worship (compare 15:8).

The warning against leading the upright astray in 28:10 resembles Jesus' warning against causing His disciples to sin in Matthew 18:6. This is looked on in the proverb as an entrapment, with the perpetrator falling into his own pit, similar to Proverbs 26:27.

For 28:11, the NIV has: "A rich man may be wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who has discernment sees through him." As The New American Commentary notes: "In this context the idea probably is that the wealthy think that their money proves they are smarter and morally superior, but the poor see that they are just more ruthless."

Hezekiah's Solomonic Collection Continued (Proverbs 28:12-29:2)

#### 20. Various Proverbs (28:12-29:27)

The remainder of Hezekiah's collection of proverbs by Solomon concerns "the general health of society. The text emphasizes the need for moral leadership, decries all attempts at easy money, and stresses the need to maintain the fundamental institutions of society....

"(1) Good Government and Bad Government I (28:12) ....TYPE: INDIVIDUAL PROVERB"

(NAC). Here we see the righteous rejoicing contrasted with the wicked arising. In context, the righteous rejoicing has to do with them having a reason to rejoice—that being that righteousness is prevailing in society, as opposed to the contrast where wickedness is prevailing. To reflect this idea, some versions use the word "triumph" instead of rejoice—this being the reason for the exultation. Contrariwise, when the wicked take charge of society, people make themselves scarce to avoid suffering abuse and exploitation. This verse corresponds to similar language in verse 28 and 29:2.

"(2) Turning From Sin (28:13-14) .... TYPE: THEMATIC" (NAC). Verse 13 shows the importance of admitting guilt. Yet it also shows that it's not enough to merely confess our sins. We must also forsake them—that is, turn our lives around in repentance. In verse 14, the word rendered "reverent" in the NKJV actually means "in dread"—probably in the sense of being fearful of consequences. Besides the religious meaning here, there may also be a general societal application to these verses—those who are quick to confess mistakes or even crimes remorsefully, making changes with appropriate fear of consequences, are more likely to obtain mercy from others in various settings, whether social, employment or court.

“(3) Tyranny (28:15-16) ....TYPE: THEMATIC....

“(4) Guilt and Innocence (28:17-18) .... TYPE: THEMATIC” (NAC). Verse 17 concerns a murderer trying to escape but not succeeding. The statement “Let no one help him” does not mean that we should not help murderers in any way. After all, we should try to help all sinners admit guilt and come to repentance. The point is that we should not help them in their flight? either supporting their attempt to run from justice or aiding them in their mental flight from guilt by seeking to make them feel better about what they’ve done.

“(5) Prosperity by Fair Means and Foul (28:19-27) .... TYPE: THEMATIC .... While not condemning possessions in themselves, Proverbs always rejects greed. It contrasts financial prudence, diligence, and generosity with the desire for quick and easy money. Greed can be manifested in unrealistic business enterprises (v. 19), accepting bribes (v. 21) [though there is some question on the point of this verse], ingratiating oneself with powerful people (v. 23), taking from one’s parents (v. 24), and general greediness (vv. 22, 25)” (NAC).

Verse 19 is one of the proverbs of the Hezekiah collection that are close in wording or meaning to verses in the main Solomonic collection (compare 12:11).

Proverbs 28:20 warns against hastening to be rich. One major problem here, as verse 22 shows, is that a person engaged in this pursuit has an “evil eye”?being self-absorbed when it comes to money. Recall 23:6, where the NKJV has “miser” when the literal meaning, as the margin shows, is “one who has an evil eye” (compare 22:9, where words literally meaning “good eye” are translated as “generous eye”). This self-focus leads a person to disregard others, to not care if he is taking advantage of them. Pursuing quick and easy money is also a sign of folly in that one is trying to circumvent the principles of hard work and patience laid out in many proverbs. This sooner or later leads to poverty.

The point of verse 21 is disputed. Some see the verse as showing partiality resultant from a very small bribe. Others maintain that the point is that judges not show partiality to the rich in a dispute with the poor as the poor may be acting out of desperation. Still others argue that the point is for judges to not show partiality to the poor?that despite their regrettable circumstances the law must be upheld.

In verse 24, the one who says there’s nothing wrong with having robbed his parents perhaps maintains this on the grounds that he will receive an inheritance eventually anyway?or perhaps he simply sees it as something his parents would never seek to punish him over. Yet the verse goes on to label the offender as companion to a destroyer (see the similar phrase in 18:9). This is essentially saying that the son is among those who tear down society. Moreover, if one would treat his own parents this way, how will he treat the rest of society?

Verse 27 shows that those who give to others in need will not lack. On a merely human level, generous people are better liked, which serves for advancement in life, and when generous people themselves suffer need, others come to their aid. Furthermore, of course, God rewards the kindnesses we show others. As to those who shut their eyes to the needs of the poor, they will also not suffer lack?of curses, that is! As with the positive result, this negative one is partially because of people’s natural reaction and partially because of God’s intervention.

“(6) Good Government and Bad Government II (28:28?29:2)....TYPE: THEMATIC, INCLUSIO....The verses echo 28:12.” Between the framing verses contrasting wicked and righteous rule (28:28; 29:2), 29:1 assures that those who persist in wickedness will ultimately fall. This is because they stubbornly refuse to change?illustrating the importance of heeding rebukes when given.

## Acts 24

So apostle Sha'ul is now going to be on trial in Caesarea in front of the governor. It took five days for Sha'ul's accusers to arrive there: Hananyah, with elders, and one Tertullus, and they brought charges against Sha'ul. They all had Tertullus speak for them, and he begins with great flatteries towards the Roman rule of Felix. He accuses Sha'ul of causing dissention and being a ring-leader of a sect called the Natsarenes, of profaning the Set-apart place, and that the Yahudim wish to judge Sha'ul according to their law.

Now it was Sha'ul's turn to speak. He told the governor he had been in Jerusalem for only twelve days, and that he had not been found in the Set-apart place disputing anyone, nor was he stirring up dissention or causing a ruckus. He also stated the fact they these men cannot prove the charges being brought against him. He confessed that according to The Way of which they were calling a sect, he in fact believed all that is written in the Torah and in the Prophets, and that he believes in the resurrection of the dead, both of the righteous and the unrighteous.

He spoke of his testimony and kind deeds to the Jews in Asia for which he was not brought up on charges in the city by them, and advised that if he had done anything improper that they should be there also at this trial as witnesses. He told Felix that all had been fine until he mentioned the resurrection of the dead, then all the people became in an uproar. Then Felix, knowing about the work and belief of The Way brought an end to the trial and said he would make a judgment upon the return of Lysias the commander. He ordered Sha'ul to be taken and held in custody until then for his protection and to be treated with kindness – also allowing his friends to visit him.

Even after a few days of Sha'ul's imprisonment, Felix brought his wife Drusilla who was Jewish down to hear Sha'ul and he shared the Good News with both of them concerning Messiah. Sha'ul shared about righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come – which Felix became uncomfortable with – and he sent him away that day. Felix kept Sha'ul in prison for two years, calling on him often to come speak to him concerning the Faith (hoping in a bribe of silver for his release which never came). Eventually Porcius Festus succeeded Felix and wishing to please the Jews, Felix did not release Sha'ul upon his leaving his position. He remained imprisoned.