

Leprosy and Lashon Hara

How is Leprosy defined in Torah?

What are examples of Lashon Hara?

How did Yeshua address Leprosy?

Leviticus 13 – The Law Concerning Leprosy

1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

2 “When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a shiny spot on their skin that may be a defiling skin disease, they must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest.

3 The priest is to examine the sore on the skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is a defiling skin disease. When the priest examines that person, he shall pronounce them ceremonially unclean.

4 If the shiny spot on the skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest is to isolate the affected person for seven days.

5 On the seventh day the priest is to examine them, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to isolate them for another seven days.

9 “When the leprous sore is on a person, the he shall be brought to the priest.

47 “Also, if a garment has a leprous plague (mold / fungus) in it, whether it is a woolen garment or a linen garment,

49 “and if the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it is a leprous plague and shall be shown to the priest.

How is Leprosy defined in the Torah?

This chapter in Leviticus goes into great detail regarding leprosy, which in Hebrew is צָרַעַת Tzara'at, which is Strong's #6883, Leprous / Skin Afflictions. This type of leprosy can be associated with a skin disorder but could also pertain to a person's clothes, pottery and even a house.

This skin affliction is a spiritual disease that was diagnosed by a Kohanim priest and not a doctor. It is not the same leprosy that we know today as Hansen's disease.

Lev. 13: 47 Also, if a garment has a leprous plague in it, whether it is a woolen garment or a linen garment.

Lev. 14: 34 "When you have come into the land of Canaan, which I give you as a possession, and I put a leprous plague in a house in the land of your possession,

14: 35 and he who owns the house comes and tells the priest, saying, "It seems to me there is some plague in the house."

Sometimes tzara'at would appear in a house that was vacated by a Canaanite. The Canaanite would hide their gold, silver, precious stones, and their idols in the walls of their houses, to reclaim and at a later date. When the Jews later occupied those houses, God would show them where the treasure was located or where the idols were hidden, so they could be destroyed.

This form of leprosy is manifested because of a spiritual disease of murder, adultery, pride, theft, greed, vanity, or gossip (lashon hara or evil speech.)

From the word **צַרַעַת** tzara'at (leprosy) we find the root letters: tzadai, resh, ayin, which are found in the word 'metzora' which means 'leper'.

מְצֹרָע = Metzora = Leper

The first two letters of this word **מְצֹ** 'motzi' means 'evil'.

The second two letters **רָע** 'ra' means 'speech'.

“**Evil Speech**” is also referred to as Lashon Hara, which results in the evidence as referred to as tzara'at or leprosy.

[Ibn Ezra quotes that Metzora is made up of the words Motzi Ra - therefore, Metzora requires us to remember that when we speak Lashon Hara and can serve as a prohibition for it.]

What are some examples of Lashon Hara?

Examples of this evil speech:

Exodus 4: 1-7

1 Moses answered, “What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you?’”

2 Then the LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” “A staff,” he replied.

3 The LORD said, “Throw it on the ground.” Moses threw it on the ground, and it became a snake, and he ran from it.

4 Then the LORD said to him, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.” So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand.

5 “This,” said the LORD, “is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you.”

6 Then the LORD said, “Put your hand inside your cloak.” **So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, the skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.**

7 “Now put it back into your cloak,” he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh.

Moses was the first person to get Tzara’at when the Lord told him that He wanted to rescue Israel from bondage in Egypt, Moses told God, “... what if they won’t believe You have sent me...”

At this point Moses’ hand turned white with tzara’at / leprosy, for speaking evil about God’s people.

Question: Can you think of another example of someone getting Leprosy for Lashon Hara?

Num. 12:1 **Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses** because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite.

Num. 12:10 When the cloud lifted from above the tent, **Miriam’s skin was leprous it became as white as snow. Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had a defiling skin disease,**

12:11 and he said to Moses, “Please, my lord, I ask you not to hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed.

Miriam was speaking evil of Moses and was inflicted with tzara’at / leprosy.

Question: Can you think of another person in the Tanach who got Leprosy?

Example of Greed:

II Kings 5:20 **Gehazi**, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, “My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the LORD lives, **I will run after him and get something from him.**”

5:24 When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left.

5:25 When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?” “Your servant didn’t go anywhere,” Gehazi answered.

5:26 But Elisha said to him, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves?”

5:27 Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.” **Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.**

The greed of Gehazi brought tzara’at / leprosy on himself.

It is interesting to note that in the book of Leviticus, chapters 12, 13, 14 and 15 address impurities, leprosy, bodily discharges all pertaining to some manner of ‘uncleanness’. Immediately in the next chapter of Leviticus 16 YHVH spoke to Moses about the Day of Atonement and how the people could restore themselves back to YHVH.

Lev. 16:16 So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so, he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

Yehovah used tzara'at, which was essentially a spiritual disease or affliction, not as a punishment, but rather, to lead His people to teshuva or repentance.

Not to say that natural uncleanness is a sin but rather reveal to us our sinful nature and uncleanness which prevents us from drawing near to YHVH (korban).

God oftentimes disciplines us for our sins, but He uses our failures to show us the ultimate purpose that God has for us, is for the purpose of **granting us the gift of repentance / teshuvah.**

Yeshua was sent to draw us close to the Father, to bring us back into fellowship with YHVH.

What did Yeshua do when He met someone with Leprosy?

Yeshua healed all the lepers he met during His ministry, but each time He tells the leper **to go show yourself to the priest** (Kohanim). The skin affliction in Leviticus is a spiritual disease that had to be diagnosed by a Kohanim priest and not a doctor.

When the leper would show him/herself to the priest it was a second witness to the healing that had taken place.

As noted previously, this type of leprosy is not the same leprosy as we know today as Hansen's disease.

Mark 1: 40 – 45 “Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him, and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."

Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."

As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.

And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once,

and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, **show yourself to the priest**, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction."

Matt. 8: 2-4 And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; **but go your way, show yourself to the priest**, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Interesting to note that in these two healings, **Yeshua admonished the lepers NOT to tell anyone or say anything to anyone**. When reading this, we understand that Yeshua was not yet proclaiming His position as King. He was not drawing attention to Himself but was saying that all attention should be directed back to the Father. Which is a plausible explanation.

Could there be another explanation?

Can we take a little deeper look into these words of Yeshua to these men.

Was Yeshua actually saying, "Don't let your words get you into trouble again!"?

It was your mouths and words that got you into trouble in the first place, don't let the words of lashon hara result in you getting leprosy again.

Luke 17: 12-19 Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.

And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

So when He saw them, He said to them, "**Go, show yourselves to the priests.**" And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God,

and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"

Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"

And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

How many lepers went to show themselves to the priest?

All ten lepers went to show themselves to the priest as directed by Yeshua as was ritually customary.

But ONE leper definitely saw The High Priest....

....that leper that came to show himself to Yeshua,
the TRUE High Priest.

So when we go back to Leviticus 13 we read about the actions of the leper.

Lev.13:45 "...and he shall cover his moustache, and cry, "Unclean, Unclean!""

If a leper was around people he was commanded to SHOUT, UNCLEAN, UNCLEAN!!!!

We understand these cries were warnings to those who were nearby, not to come too close so as not to be exposed to leprosy, which is a valid explanation.

Could there be another reason for them to be proclaiming out loud, that they committed the sin of lashon hara, spoken of in secret?

Were they actually saying, "Don't come near to me", "I gossip too much", "I talk about others behind their backs, stay away from me!"

Not only was the disease of leprosy bad enough, but they also had to loudly proclaim with their mouth's the very sin which they committed.

Ps.64:3 "The sins we commit in secret will
be shouted from the mountain top."

In conclusion, we can see that Lashon Hara was directly related to Leprosy, along with other reasons.

Though this is not an exhaustive study into this topic, it is just a starting point to see another Facet of the Diamond we know as the Torah.

