

Healing from Within

Lesson on Parashah 28; M'tzora

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Most years, last week's parashah and this week's parashah are read together. Because it is leap year, they are read separately. They both discuss laws concerning tzara'at. The message last week described tzara'at as a type of leprosy. When it afflicts clothing or a house, it is described as a type of mold. Here we can see the dangers of human science, language, and translation. Through the eyes of science, all we can do is observe and describe based on concepts which we are already familiar with. You go to the doctor with sniffles and a sore throat, he is likely to take those symptoms, diagnose you with a common cold, and prescribe appropriate remedies based on that. We read God's Word, read the descriptions of tzara'at and based on such descriptions see that this is describing leprosy based on what we know about leprosy. Then as it affects a house or clothes, we know this cannot be leprosy, so the closest thing we know in our culture and language is mold. Mold and leprosy are two totally different things, yet are called the same thing, tzara'at. Despite what it may appear to be, I don't think we really know what it is, it is not something we have today in the way it was in Israel, and was most likely isolated to the community of Israel. Because of this, we ought to resist the urge to translate this word into an English understanding, and call it tzara'at and nothing more. Whatever it was, it was an affliction, caused by specific violations of Torah, and used to reveal such sin within the community of God's people so that one way or another such sin could be eradicated from the community.

At the time these laws were given, God was preparing a people who were called to be holy as Adonai their God is holy. In a more general way, God had already made a connection between obedience to Him and their health.

You are not to worship their gods, serve them or follow their practices; rather, you are to demolish them completely and smash their standing-stones to pieces. You are to serve Adonai your God; and he will bless your food and water. I will take sickness away from among you. [Sh'mot/Exodus 23:24-25]

Therefore, you are to keep the mitzvot, laws and rulings which I am giving you today, and obey them. Because you are listening to these rulings, keeping and obeying them, Adonai your God will keep with you the covenant and mercy that he swore to your ancestors. He will love you, bless you and increase your numbers; he will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground - your grain, wine, olive oil and the young of your cattle and sheep - in the land he swore to your ancestors that he would give you. You will be blessed more than all other peoples; there will not be a sterile male or female among you, and the same with your livestock. Adonai will remove all illness from you

- he will not afflict you with any of Egypt's dreadful diseases, which you have known; instead, he will lay them on those who hate you. [D'varim/Deuteronomy 7:11-15]

"If you will not observe and obey all the words of this Torah that are written in this book, so that you will fear this glorious and awesome name, Adonai your God; then Adonai will strike down you and your descendants with extraordinary plagues and severe sicknesses that go on and on. He will bring back upon you all the diseases the Egyptians had, which you were in dread of; and they will cling to you. Not only that, but Adonai will bring upon you all the sicknesses and plagues that are not written in this book of the Torah - until you are destroyed. [D'varim 28:58-61]

See now that I, yes, I, am he; and there is no god beside me. I put to death, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; no one saves anyone from my hand! [D'varim 32:39]

If we look at the context of the tzara'at laws, we see other laws concerning uncleanness that would come as the result of very private matters. It would be easy for people to become unclean in one of these ways, and since chances are only they knew about it, or possibly a spouse, it may be tempting to let it pass and not do what God commanded to become clean again. Hidden sin of any kind could not exist in Israel in order for them to be a holy nation. If their faith was superficial, then after entering the pagan land of Kena'an, they would easily be swayed by the foreign gods of those people.

God has used sickness and disease throughout Scripture and continues to do so to show people their sin and turn them back to Him.

It was because of their flagrant greed that I was angry and struck them; I hid myself and was angry, but they continued on their own rebellious way. I have seen their ways, and I will heal them; I will lead them and give comfort to them and to those who mourn for them – I will create the right words: 'Shalom shalom to those far off and to those nearby!' says Adonai; 'I will heal them!' " But the wicked are like the restless sea – unable to be still, its waters toss up mud and dirt. There is no shalom, says my God, for the wicked. [Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 57:17-21]

Why cry that your wound and pain are past healing? I have done these things to you because of your great wickedness, because of your many sins. [Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah 30:15]

We have to be careful with assuming that sickness is always the result of sin. We see with Iyov/Job, who was blameless before God and man, that he lost not only possessions and family, but his health as well. This was a test of his faithfulness to God rather than a result of sin. Sickness can come as the result of a sin filled world and no fault of our own as well. However, in knowing that sickness can be the result of sin, dealing with sin first removes this as a cause for the sickness, should the person not be healed as a result. This is healing from the inside out.

Something ought to be noted about sin. Sin in Hebrew is chatta'ah, the root of which is chata, which means, to miss. Even the word pictures for the letters, which as chet, tet, and aleph, can provide the imagery of being outside or surrounding the power or will of God. God is always the target which we constantly strive for, Torah teaches us how to hit what we are aiming at. Sin is when we miss. When we are found outside the will of God through sin, it is God's grace which enables us to continue striving toward God, through Torah.

When God forgives us our sin, we are healed of an internal sickness that keeps us from God. Physical sickness can result from this to get us to receive this healing. Once this takes place, unless some other purpose prevails, then healing for the physical ailment can take place. It does little good as far as the Kingdom of God is concerned, for physical healing to take place if sin still abides within. We see this exemplified in the ministry of Yeshua.

They could not get near Yeshua because of the crowd, so they stripped the roof over the place where he was, made an opening, and lowered the stretcher with the paralytic lying on it.

Seeing their trust, Yeshua said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Some Torah-teachers sitting there thought to themselves,

"How can this fellow say such a thing? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins except God?"

But immediately Yeshua, perceiving in his spirit what they were thinking, said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?"

Which is easier to say to the paralyzed man? 'Your sins are forgiven'? or 'Get up, pick up your stretcher and walk'?

But look! I will prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." He then said to the paralytic,

"I say to you: get up, pick up your stretcher and go home!"

In front of everyone the man got up, picked up his stretcher at once and left. They were all utterly amazed and praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" [Mark 2:4-12]

One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. Yeshua, seeing this man and knowing that he had been there a long time, said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered, "I have no one to put me in the pool when the water is disturbed; and while I'm trying to get there, someone goes in ahead of me." Yeshua said to him, "Get up, pick up your mat and walk!"

Immediately the man was healed, and he picked up his mat and walked. Now that day was Shabbat, so the Judeans said to the man who had been healed, "It's Shabbat! It's against Torah for you to carry your mat!" But he answered them, "The man who healed me – he's the one who told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.' " They asked him, "Who is the man who told you to pick it up and walk?" But the man who had been healed didn't know who it was, because Yeshua had slipped away into the crowd. Afterwards Yeshua found him in the Temple court and said to him, "See, you are well! Now stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you!" [Yochanan/John 5:5-14]

Our minds differentiate between the spirit and the body, which is a Greek concept. In a Hebrew mindset, however, until death, they are intertwined. Even in modern medicine, doctors see a connection between the mind and body. Negative emotions and stress cause all sorts of illness and even disease because they lower the body's immune system and creates chemicals and such which cause health problems. This is where ideas of meditation and relaxation come from. Even love, joy, and peace are promoted for good health. The problem is, Ha Satan has his counterfeits for these things. With God, the concepts of ahavas,

simchah, and shalom, have much deeper meanings and purposes than the world's concepts of the same thing. This is why study, understanding, and obedience to God's Word is so important. It teaches us to identify the counterfeits which lead us to more sin, and how to exercise the true virtues which are of God and lead to God.

Our bodies are tabernacles of the Holy Spirit. Sin creates tears in the tent. God's concept of healing is mending those tears. The tabernacle had a function, however. It was not enough for the tabernacle to be whole if it was never used for its intended purpose, which was to bring glory to God and allow help sinful people be healed of their sins as well as their physical ailments through the service of the priests. When we are healed, it is not just for us to praise God for being healed, but to then use our healed body and spirit to heal others.

Yeshua called his twelve talmidim and gave them authority to drive out unclean spirits and to heal every kind of disease and weakness. [Mattityahu/Matthew 10:1]

The prayer offered with trust will heal the one who is ill – the Lord will restore his health; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. [Ya'akov/James 5:15]

In the passage earlier, when Yeshua healed the man at the pool, He asked a strange question. "Do you want to be healed?" This is strange if we think of the Son of God asking a crippled man if he wants to be healed. Of course he does. However, if we think of Him as a Jewish rabbi talking to a fellow Jewish man, then it is probable the "healing" Yeshua is asking about is spiritual rather than physical. He asks because there is a responsibility put on the man to follow Torah in a new way if he agrees. Upon saying "yes", Yeshua then heals him to help him accomplish that. Later He sees the man at the temple and tells him to sin no more. If stated in the positive, He could have told the man to go and show others the same love and healing, through the power of the Holy Spirit, as directed by Torah, that Yeshua had shown to Him. Of course, we cannot forgive sins, only God can do that, but we must lead others to God, who can do it for us. We, in ourselves do not heal others either, but we are called to do it, both spiritually and physically through the power of God.

As we read about tzara'at, we have to see the overall context of Vayikra/Leviticus. God is preparing a holy people. Holiness requires not only hitting the target, but getting dead bulls-eye every time. This makes us spiritual Robbin-hoods. Is this so we can rob from the rich and give to the poor? No. It is to draw as close as we can to our Creator. As we see from the priests themselves, the closer to the presence of God we get, the more of His power we see. The Most Holy Place could only be accessed once a year, and only by the High Priest, and he had to be completely sinless, otherwise he would die. Today we have a high priest, Yeshua, who enables us to receive healing and heal others through His Word. Though He was God, He can identify with all our pains.

People despised and avoided him, a man of pains, well acquainted with illness. Like someone from whom people turn their faces, he was despised; we did not value him. In fact, it was our diseases he bore, our pains from which he suffered; yet we regarded him as punished, stricken and afflicted by God. But he was wounded because of our crimes, crushed because of our sins; the disciplining that makes us whole fell on him, and by his bruises we are healed. [Yasha'yahu/Isaiah 53:4-5]

