

TAZRIA (*tzara'at*) / METZORA (one being diseased)



Leviticus 12:1 And יהוה spoke to Moses saying, **2** Speak to *the* Children of Israel saying, **If a woman has conceived and given birth to a male child: then she will be unclean seven days just like when she is having her menstrual period.** C-MATS



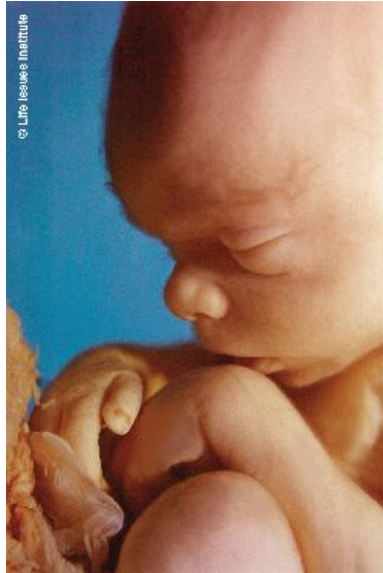
size of a bean

Question: What does it mean that the woman is unclean? Upon giving birth, a woman becomes unclean with the same regulations as those of a woman in menstruation (literally, the word niddah means someone who is "separated"). She remains separated from marital relations and may not come into the Temple to present offerings. (Chumash)

3 And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin will be circumcised. C-MATS

Question: When should a male child be circumcised? The Torah specifies that it be done on the eighth day -- a child must be circumcised on that day, even if it falls on the Sabbath, unless, of course, the infant's health requires a delay. (Chumash)

4 And the woman will then wait an additional 33 days to be purified from her blood; she will touch no consecrated thing, or come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification is over. C-MATS



5 But if she gives birth to a female child, then she will be unclean two weeks, *just like when she is having her menstrual period*: and she will wait an additional 66 days to be purified from her blood. 6 And when the days of her purification is over for a son or daughter, she will bring a lamb in *its* first year for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove **לְחַטָּאת for sin [offering] to the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation and give it to the priest: 7 Who will offer it before יהוה and make atonement for her; and she will be cleansed from the issue of her blood. **זֹאת** This is the Torah for the woman who has given birth to a male or female child. 8 And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she must bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons; one **לְחַטָּאת** for sin [offering] and the other for a sin offering: and the priest will make atonement for her and she will be clean. C-MATS**



Woman brings two turtle doves as a sin offering

Question: How long is a woman unclean after she gives birth to a male child? 40 days (7 days plus 33 days)

Question: How long is a woman unclean after she gives birth to a female child? 80 days (14 days plus 66 days) (Chumash)

Question: Why is the woman considered unclean? The commanded time of ceremonial impurity should not be regarded as a negative attitude towards birth or child-bearing on יהוה's part. יהוה *commands* child bearing, in that man is commanded to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28), children are regarded as a gift from יהוה (Psalm 127:3), and a woman with many children is considered blessed (Psalm 128:3). The key to understanding this ceremony is to understand the idea of original sin. As wonderful as a new baby is, יהוה wanted it to be remembered that with every birth another sinner was brought into the world, and the woman was here symbolically responsible for bringing a new sinner into the world. Perhaps just as importantly, the time of ceremonial impurity gave the new mother a time of rest and seclusion that she no doubt welcomed. Sexual contact with her husband was not allowed at this time, so the woman's body could heal before she conceived again. (Chumash)

Question: Why was a longer period of purification given for the birth of a daughter? The longer period of ceremonial uncleanness for the birth of a daughter should not be understood as a penalty. The time of impurity is for the symbolic responsibility of bringing other sinners into the world. When giving birth to a female, a mother brings a sinner into the world who will bring still other sinners into the world. Some also suggest the longer period of time in connection with the birth of a girl was because girls are usually smaller at birth, and this would allow more time for the mother's focused care and attention on the child. As well, since sons were more prized, the longer time at home for a mother with a new born girl would force the family to bond more deeply, over a more extended period of time with the new born girl. (Chumash)

Leviticus 13:1 And יהוה spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, **2** When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a **שָׂאֵת** *lifted up of (rising) a scab, or a bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh like the plague of tzara'at (leprosy); then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest, or to one of his sons the priests.*



Question: What is Tzara'at? *Tzara'at* (šāra'at) is really a sign of an internal moral condition. Though outwardly, *tzara'at* would seem to be a mysterious skin disease, inwardly, it reveals something about the human condition, from יהוה's point of view. Some older translations refer to these skin conditions as *tzara'at*, and the NIV translates it as *infectious skin disease*, but these translations are misleading. First of all, the symptoms described in this passage--with much emphasis on small white patches-- simply do not correspond to any symptoms of *tzara'at* or commonly called Hansen's disease. Secondly, in Torah the Cohen or priest inspects the affected skin after a week, but Hansen's disease progresses much too slowly to see a difference in a week. Thirdly, Torah has a very strange prescription for a total outbreak of *tzara'at*: In Leviticus 13:13: **"Then the priest shall consider: and, behold, has covered the tzara'at אָהָרָה all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that has אָהָרָה the plague: if it has all turned white: he is clean."** That's a pretty amazing paradox: if a person is totally covered, then he is totally clean! Now this certainly makes little medical sense, right? Yet it is actually a hint about the spiritual nature of the problem. The ancient Rabbis argued that *tzara'at* refers not to a bodily disease but to a physical manifestation of a spiritual sickness, a punishment designed to show a wrongdoer that he must mend his ways. In other words, *tzara'at* is not so much a disease as a form of supernatural spiritual discipline. The biblical treatment of *tzara'at* was complete isolation: Leviticus 13:45 **And the leper who has the plague must tear his clothes and uncover his head and cover his mustache and cry, unclean, unclean. 46 As long as he has sores, he will be defiled; he is unclean: he will live in isolation outside the camp.** The ancient Rabbis argued that the inward cause *tzara'at* was sin, particularly anti-social sins, such as lying for selfish ends, sexual immorality, false oaths, pride, and especially slander. In Matthew 15:18-209, we find Yahusha in agreement with the other Rabbis: **"18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man."** C-MATS

Leviticus 19:16 **"You will not go about as a talebearer among your people."** James 4:11 **"Speak no evil of one another."** And here is what Yahusha says, in Matthew 12:36: **"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."** Our words have the power either to build up or to tear down. With our words, we can edify, building up trust and respect and community, or can destroy, tearing down reputation and relationships and spiritual intimacy.



Question: Why was Miriam afflicted with *tzara'at*? Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife. (Moses married a gentile.) Miriam was the instigator that committed the sin of the evil tongue, speaking against Moses. People tend to make light of the sins of the tongue--gossip, backbiting, tale-bearing-- but **יהוה** takes it very, very seriously!

Discuss: Since skin disease is punishment for deeds spoken and done that everyone can see, is cancer a punishment for a man whose heart is turned against **יהוה**, since it is a disease that cannot be seen?

Question: What's so bad about a little gossip? On the surface it might seem pretty harmless; after all it's only words. But our words are much more powerful than we realize. The right word can save someone's life, and the wrong word can ruin it. Words influence the way we feel about others, with impressions that can last forever. The way a person speaks reveals who he is, and has a bigger spiritual affect on himself and others than almost anything else.

Question: How far should we go to avoid gossip and negative comments about others? The right thing to do is to avoid this type of speech, even if what we are saying is true, even if everybody knows already, even if people pressure us to tell, even if the person is right in front of us, even if we say it as a joke, even if we're just speaking generally about a certain group and even if the other guy spoke badly about us first.

Discuss: Should we speak derogatorily about groups of people as a whole? Baptists? Nerds? Doctors? Is this stereo-typing others? Is this pleasing to **יהוה**? **יהוה** does not like name calling of any sort. Always speak in love having compassion for the differences you may have with others.

Discuss: Is teasing ever appropriate- even among friends? Isn't there always truth in teasing that can hurt someone's feelings? Saying a derogatory remark about someone and then saying, "just kidding" leaves a person wondering if the teaser was really serious or not. Friends do not tease others and leave a person wondering if he is really a friend or not.

Question: The speaker obviously commits a grave sin by speaking negatively of his fellow. The listener, too, is a partner to this evil. But why is the one who is spoken of affected by their deed? Are his negative traits worsened by the fact that they are spoken of? By speaking negatively of the person's trait or deed, the evil speakers are, in effect, defining it as such; with their words, they grant substance and validity to its negative potential and make it more apparent and real to the person trying to overcome the trait thus discouraging the person and making him weak. But the same applies in the reverse: speaking favorably of another, accentuating his or her positive side, will aid him to realize himself in the manner that you have defined him. He will be encouraged and become strong.

Question: Should you speak evil about yourself-tearing yourself down in front of others? A man once came to see the rabbi and proceeded to portray himself as a villain of the worst sort. After describing at length his moral and spiritual deficiencies, he begged the rabbi to help him overcome his evil character. "Surely," said the rabbi, "you know how grave is the sin of speaking evilly of a human being. Nowhere, to my knowledge, does it say that it is permissible to speak evilly about oneself."



Evil talk is like an arrow. A person who unsheathes a sword can regret his intention and return it to its sheath. But the arrow cannot be retrieved.

Evil talk kills three people: the speaker, the listener, and the one who is spoken of.



Question: How can guarding our tongue protect us from difficulties and danger? Besides the practical effect of keeping our foot out of our mouth and helping us get along better with the people around us, being careful how we speak creates a very powerful spiritual weapon as well. Since **יהוה** treats us measure for measure, like how we behave down here, we are treated above, it follows that if we don't speak badly of others, then this damaging spiritual gossip can't happen above. It's a deep concept, but the main thing to know is that one of the best and most practical things we can do for ourselves and for others is to avoid gossip and negative speech.



Question: Granted that speaking badly of others is bad news, but is there anything wrong with just listening to this kind of talk? In a sense, making oneself an audience for gossip and put-downs is just as bad or worse than saying them ourselves. Besides enabling the gossiper to do his damage, after all no one speaks unless there's someone to listen, it is our listening and especially our believing the bad things being said that ruin people's reputations and cause the damage to be done. Also, hearing these types of things also poison our mind, and make us more likely to speak the same way in the future. The right and ethical thing to do is to steer clear of gossip and gossipers whenever and however we can.

Spiritual Exercise: Use your tongue today to build up others and not speak negatively about anyone.

Question: What is the first symptom of Tzara'at? The first symptom of tzara'at is a white patch on the skin, which must be at least the size of a large bean that has been estimated to be 3/4-inch square. (Chumash)



3 And will examine the priest **את־** the sore on his skin: and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore *appears to go deep* into the skin, it is a plague of tzara'at: and the priest will examine him and pronounce **אתו** him unclean. **4** If *the bright spot is white* on his skin and it appears not to go deep into the skin and the hair in it has not turned white; then the priest will isolate *him who has את־* the plague (sore) for seven days: **5** And the priest will examine him on the seventh day: and *if the sore has not changed in appearance and the sore has not spread on the skin*; then the priest will isolate him for seven more days: **6** And the priest will examine **אתו** him again on the seventh day: and *if the sore is somewhat dark and the sore has not spread on the skin*, the priest will pronounce him clean: it is *only* a scab: and he will wash his clothes and be clean. **7** But if the scab spreads further on the skin, after that he has been examined by the priest and declared clean, he will be examined by the priest again: **8** And *if the priest sees that the scab has spread on the skin*, then the priest will pronounce him unclean: it is tzara'at. C-MATS

Question: Who inflicts sickness on us? In Lev 13:3 and 13:4 it is clear that **את** Y'shua is the one that inflicts sickness on His covenant children as judgment from sin and it is also clear from Lev 13:17 that **את** Y'shua is also our healer. We can see these characteristics confirmed in Deut 32:39 **See now that I, even I, am He and there is no god with Me: I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand.** And also Isaiah 45:7 **I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I יהוה do all these things.** C-MATS

Question: The Hebrew priests wouldn't judge whether a person had a spiritual sickness called tzara'at until they had examined him twice. **יהוה** judges us the way we judge others. What do you think this means? Almost anything a person does has both positive and negative aspects. For instance if I do someone a favor it might be partly out of a genuine desire to help, and partly because I want him to do me a favor someday. **יהוה** knows that, and He will choose to focus on the positive or negative parts of us and our actions to the exact degree that we choose to focus on the positive or negative aspects of others. If we want **יהוה** to give us the benefit of the doubt, all we have to do is start giving the benefit of the doubt to others.

Question: The proper way to relate to a new person we meet is to simultaneously respect and suspect him. What do you think this means and why might such an approach be wise? When we meet someone new, we have no way of really knowing what he's about. Some people make a great first impression and turn out to be monsters, others look bad but are really good as gold. Therefore, until we know someone and are able to decide what he's truly like; respecting him gives us the chance to make a close connection, while suspecting him protects us from getting burned.

Question: Is there ever a point that we should stop giving someone 'another chance'? While it's right to be patient and forgiving with people, when we see that continually giving them another chance becomes seriously destructive for us, them or others, the ethical thing to do is to say (and mean) 'no more chances.'

Spiritual Exercise: Do not judge others by their appearance. Give others a chance before you judge them.

9 When the plague of tzara'at is on a man, then he will be brought to the priest; **10** and the priest shall see *him*: and, behold, if **אֵץ** lifted up (rising) be white in the skin, and it has turned the hair white, and there be quick raw flesh **אֵץ** lifted up (rising); **11** It is a chronic tzara'at on the skin and the priest will pronounce him unclean **אֵץ** and you will not isolate him: because he is unclean. **12** And if tzara'at (leprosy) breaks out on the skin and covers the tzara'at **אֵץ** all the skin from his head to his feet, or wherever the priest looks. C-MATS



13 Then the priest shall consider: and, behold, has covered the tzara'at **אֵץ** all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean *that has* **אֵץ** the plague: *if it has all turned white: he is clean.* **14** But when inflamed flesh appears on him, he will be unclean. **15** And will examine the priest **אֵץ** the flesh inflamed and pronounce him unclean: because the inflamed flesh is unclean: it is tzara'at. **16** Or if the inflamed flesh turns again and is changed to white, he will come to the priest; **17** And the priest will examine him: and *if the sores have turned white; then the priest will pronounce him clean who has* **אֵץ** the plague: he is clean. C-MATS



Boil

18 If the man has a boil on his skin that heals, 19 And there be in the place of the boil a **אֵשֶׁת** *lifted up (rising) white* or a bright spot, white, *and* somewhat reddish, and it *shall* be showed to the priest; 20 And when the priest examines it, if *it is* appears to be lower than the skin *around it* and the hair in it has turned white; the priest will pronounce him unclean: *it is* a plague of tzara'at broken out from the boil. 21 But if the priest examines it and *there are* no white hairs in it and it *does not appear* lower than the skin, but *is* somewhat dark; then the priest will isolate him *for* seven days: 22 And if it spreads across the skin, then the priest will pronounce **אֵתוֹ** *him* unclean: *it is* a plague. 23 But if the bright spot stays in the same place and does not spread, *it is* a scar of the boil; and the priest will pronounce him clean.
C-MATS



Burn

24 Or if a man has a burn on his skin caused by fire and *the inflamed flesh* where it was burned has a reddish-white or white bright spot; 25 Then the priest will examine אֵתֶּךָ *it (him)*: and *if* the hair in the bright spot has turned white and it appears deeper than the skin; *it is* tzara'at broken out from the burn: the priest will pronounce אֵתֶּךָ *him* unclean: *it is* the plague of tzara'at. 26 But if the priest examines it and *there is* no white hair on the bright spot and it is no lower than the other skin, but *is* somewhat dark; then the priest will shut him up *for* seven days: 27 And the priest will examine him *on* the seventh day: *and* if it has spread across the skin, then the priest will pronounce אֵתֶּךָ *him* unclean: *it is* the plague of tzara'at. 28 And if the bright spot stay in his place, *and* spread not in the skin, but it be somewhat dark; *it is* a אֵתֶּךָ *lifted up (rising)* of the burning, and the priest shall pronounce him clean: for *it is* an inflammation of the burning. C-MATS



Sore on the head

29 If a man or woman have a sore upon the head or beard; 30 Then shall examine the priest אֵתֶּךָ *the* sore: and *if it* appears deeper than the skin; *and* in it *is* a yellow thin hair; then the priest will pronounce אֵתֶּךָ *him* unclean: *it is* a crusted area, tzara'at on the head or beard. 31 But if examines the priest אֵתֶּךָ *the* diseased crusted area and *it appears* deeper than the skin and *there is* no black hair in it; then the priest will isolate *the man who has* אֵתֶּךָ *the* diseased crusted area *for* seven days: 32 And shall examine the priest אֵתֶּךָ *the* sore on the seventh day and if the crusted area has not spread and there is no yellow hair in it and the crusted area appears not to be deeper than the skin; 33 He will be shaven, אֵתֶּךָ *and* the crusted area he will not shave; and the priest will isolate *him who has* אֵתֶּךָ *the* crusted area *for* seven more days: 34 And shall examine the priest אֵתֶּךָ *the* crusted area on the seventh day and *if* the crusted area has not spread on the skin and does not appear deeper than the skin; then the priest will pronounce אֵתֶּךָ *him* clean: and he will wash his clothes and be clean. 35 But if the crusted area spreads on the skin after he has been declared clean; 36 Then the priest will examine him: and *if* the crusted area has spread on the skin, the priest will look for a yellow hair; he *is* unclean. 37 But if the crusted area has not changed its appearance and a black hair has grown in it; the crusted area has healed, he *is* clean: and the priest will pronounce him clean. 38 If a man or a woman has on his skin bright spots, white bright spots; 39 Then the priest will examine *him*: and *if the* bright spots on the skin *are* dull white; they *are* freckled spots that grow on the skin; he *is* clean. 40 And the man whose hair has fallen off his head, he *is* bald; *but* he *is* clean. C-MATS

Question: How will you know if you have Tzara'at? Any undesirable change in someone's physical or economic circumstances -- even if it is only a relatively minor inconvenience-- should be taken as a possible punishment for sin, and the victim should seek guidance in determining where he has fallen short and how he can improve himself. One who suffers יהוה's apparent displeasure should never dismiss his discomfort as inconsequential. You must always question yourself and your deeds, and take reverses as a sign from יהוה that he must remedy his way. יהוה begins by inflicting minor pain, but if that is not taken to heart, much worse may come.

Discuss: If you begin to have problems with finances or health, how do you know if judgment has come upon you? If you are not getting answers to your prayers or not feeling like you are close to יהוה, is it because you are in sin and need to repent?

41 And if his hair fallen off from the front part of his head, he is forehead bald: but he is clean. 42 And if there is a white reddish sore on the bald head or forehead; it is a tzara'at breaking out on his bald head or forehead. 43 Then the priest will examine אחרו it (him): and if שאת lifted up (rising) is reddish-white on his bald head or forehead, appearing like tzara'at on the rest of the skin; 44 He is a leprous man, he is unclean: the priest will pronounce him utterly unclean; his plague is on his head. C-MATS



Bald head with infection

Question: How is the punishment of a bald man as compared to someone with hair? When the merciful יהוה punishes a person, He prefers to do so in a way that will not cause him public humiliation. Let the sinner know and repent, but let him not be humiliated unnecessarily. The tzara'at of baldness is different. Its location is such that everyone sees the affliction and knows that יהוה has withheld His mercy from the sinner. Apparently, he has sinned in a grievous manner, as is implied by the Torah's description of him as a person with tzara'at. (Chumash)



The diseased person is sent away from the camp

45 And the leper who has the plague must tear his clothes and uncover his head and cover his mustache and cry, unclean, unclean. 46 As long as he has sores, he will be defiled; he *is* unclean: he will live in isolation outside the camp. C-MATS

Question: What must the man with tzara'at do? He must dress and act like a mourner, to influence him to grieve and repent the behavior that brought the punishment of tzara'at. It was customary for a mourner to pull his collar or scarf over his lips and to pull his cloak over his head and to tear his garments and to grow his hair long. He was also forbidden to greet people, but he was permitted to study and discuss the Torah. He must warn others of his affliction by calling out "unclean" to inform others of his anguish so that they will pray for him. (Chumash)



Question: Why is a man with tzara'at singled out to live in isolation? Because his affliction is a punishment for slander, which causes husbands to be separated from their wives and friends from one another. Therefore it is fitting that he be punished through isolation from society. The ultimate purpose of "a punishment that fits the crime" is to make the sinner aware of what he did and what it has brought upon him. Such reflection should lead him to repent.(Chumash)

47 When the plague of tzara'at inflects a garment, *whether it is a woolen or linen garment*; **48** Whether it is on the threads or woven in parts of linen *or* wool; whether on a hide or anything made of leather; **49** And if the stain is greenish or reddish on the garment or a hide, woven in, or threads, or in anything of leather; it is a plague of tzara'at and will be shown to אֶת־ the priest. C-MATS

Question: How did יהוה afflict a man's possessions if he was in sin? Afflictions on garments and houses are not natural phenomena. They appeared only during the time when the Hebrew nation was generally in perfect accord with יהוה and was a fitting host to His Presence. When an individual would fall into sin and was no longer worthy of this exalted rank, then יהוה would signal this fall by afflicting his possessions with ugly discolorations. (Chumash)

50 And shall examine the priest אֶת־ the stain and isolate *the garment that has אֶת־ the plague for seven days*: **51** And he will examine אֶת־ the stain on the seventh day: if the stain has spread on the garment, whether in the woven in, threads, hide, *or* anything that is made of leather; the infection is tzara'at; it is unclean.**52** He will burn אֶת־ that garment, whether אֶת־ woven in parts or אֶת־ threads in wool or linen, or אֶת־ anything *made* of leather, which has the stain: for it is a contagious tzara'at; it must be burned up *completely* in the fire. C-MATS

Question: What suffering does the owner of the contaminated possessions receive? The owner suffers the "pain" of a monetary loss when the garment is destroyed. Since the item is burned without any use being made of it, it has been cursed. (Chumash)

53 And if the priest examines it and the stain has not spread in the garment, whether in the woven in parts or in the threads, or in anything of leather; **54** Then the priest will command that they wash *the garment* אֶת־ which has the plague and he will isolate it *for seven more days*: **55** And the priest will examine it after *he has washed* אֶת־ the stain but *if* has not changed the stain אֶת־ its color and has not spread; it is unclean; you will burn it *completely* in the fire; it is rotten, *whether* it is on the inside or outside. **56** And if the priest sees the stain appears dark after washing אֶת־ it (*him*) then he shall tear אֶת־ it (*him*); from the garment *the stain* out of or hide or threads or woven parts: **57** And if it appears again in the garment, whether in the woven in parts, threads, or anything of leather; it is contagious: you will burn אֶת־ that *garment* which has the stain with fire. **58** And if the stain has left *from* the garment that you washed, whether woven in parts, or threads, or anything of leather, then it will be washed a second time and will be clean. **59** אֶת־ This is the Torah concerning inflections of tzara'at in a garment of wool or linen, whether in the woven in parts or threads or anything of leather, when to pronounce it clean or unclean. C-MATS

METZORA (*cleaning the leper*)



Leviticus 14:1 And יהוה spoke to Moses saying, **2 זאת** *This* will be *the* Torah of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He will be brought to the priest: **3** And the priest will go outside of the camp; and the priest examines to see *if* the sores have healed in the afflicted person. C-MATS

Question: Why is the afflicted person sent outside the camp? The unique laws of the metzora have established that, despite the fact that his contamination is manifested in a change on his body, it was caused by his degraded spiritual condition. Being alone outside the camp gives him the opportunity to reflect on his deficiencies and to repent so that he can once more become worthy of becoming part of his nation. As soon as that change takes place within his mind and heart, the same יהוה who afflicted him will remove the mark of his degradation and he can begin the process of return. (Chumash)

Question: What are seven things that bring on tzara'at? Slander, bloodshed, false oath, incest, pride, robbery, and envy. (Chumash)

4 Then the priest will command for him who is to be cleansed to take two living clean birds and cedar wood and scarlet yarn and hyssop *branch*. C-MATS

Question: How does the metzora receive atonement for his sins? Atonement for sin requires that the former sinner purge himself of the moral flaw that caused his misdeeds. The underlying cause of slander and gossip -- the sins that are punished by tzara'at -- is haughtiness, because it breeds the contempt for others that lets one talk about them callously. The metzora's repentance entails a resolve to change himself, a change that is graphically symbolized by the Cedarwood, Scarlet thread, and Hyssop. (Chumash)



Hyssop plant



Oldest cedarwood tree

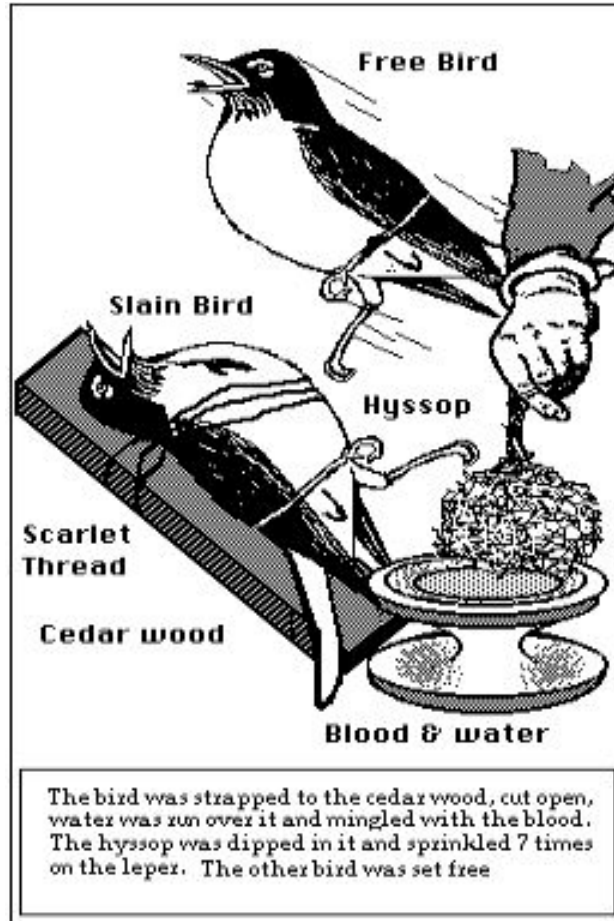


Scarlet thread

Question: What is the purpose of bringing the cedar, scarlet thread, and hyssop? He should bring cedar wood, because he has exalted himself like a tall cedar, but he should humble himself like a grass (hyssop). He should bring a tongue-like strip of wool dyed crimson. But the true meaning of humility is not to be broken and bowed, but to be humble even as one stands straight and tall. (Chumash)

5 Then shall command the priest to kill one of את the birds האֶתֶּת *the one* in an earthen vessel over running water: 6 As for את the living bird, he will take אתהּ *it (him)* ואֶת־ and the cedar wood ואֶת־ and the scarlet yarn ואֶת־ and the hyssop leaves and will dip אֹתָם *them* ואֶת־ and the living bird in the blood of the bird *that was killed over the running water:* 7 And *the priest* will sprinkle upon him who is to be cleansed from the sickness seven times and will pronounce him clean and the living will *be set free* את־ bird into an open field. C-MATS

Question: Is there a medical cure for tzara'at? If someone is healed from tzara'at it is a miracle because there is no cure. Tzara'at begins from inside the body and is a perfect spiritual picture of where our sin originates from and we all are born with this unclean condition and in need of being redeemed and healed. The priestly ritual does not heal them; this would have already happened. So with that brief mind-set the placement of the את will confirm what Father is desirous of revealing about the work of Messiah in this ritual. There are two birds and the את bird being killed is to declare the leper as clean and is a type and foreshadow of Messiah as our redeemer. The את bird was tied to the cedar wood stake by the scarlet yarn and lowered into the earthen (*clay*) vessel (*grave*) being filled with running water while the priest probably twist its neck and drowned it. The second את bird is sprinkled with the hyssop branch after being dipped into the את blood and water. The man is then sprinkled with the את blood and water from the hyssop branch and the את live bird is released in an open field. Then the man is declared clean by the high priest. The released את live bird symbolizes the את Messiah's resurrection from the dead. Since there are את by both birds, both work together to declare the leper clean. The shaving of את hair is to humble him. The two male lambs are slain to atone for his past sin and guilt (*conscience*). The blood is placed on the man's right ear, right thumb and right big toe to provide atonement for the whole man, from the sins of his past words, to his past deeds and his past ways of sin in which he walked. The symbolism is a perfect picture of את Y'shua the Messiah as the lamb who would be slain from the foundation of the world (1 Pet 1:20) to make atonement for our past sins inwardly and outwardly. (C-MATS)



8 And he will wash who is to be cleansed **את** his clothes and shave off **את** all his hair and wash himself in water, *so that* he may be clean: and after that he can come into the camp, *but he must live outside of his tent seven days.* 9 But on the seventh day he must shave off **את** all his hair **את** on his head, **את** and his beard **את** and eyebrows, **את** and all his hair he must shave off: and he must wash **את** his clothes and wash **את** his body in water and *then* he will be clean. C-MATS



Set the bird free

Question: Why are the head, beard, and eyebrows shaved? The head represents haughtiness, since he considered himself better and more worthy of respect than those he insulted. The beard frames the mouth, which spoke the gossip and slander. The eyebrows represent the base trait of jealousy [narrowness of the eye], which motivated him to destroy the reputation of others. (Chumash)

10 And on the eighth day he will take two male lambs without defect and אֶת one female lamb in its first year without defect and 3/10 deals (6 ½ quarts) of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil and one log (2/3 pint) of oil. **11** And the priest will present those things that make him clean and אֶת the man that is to be made clean before יהוה at the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation: *Prophecy Fulfilled-Lev.14:11 The leper cleansed-Sign to priesthood-Luke 5:12-14; Acts 6:7.* **12** And will take the priest אֶת male lamb, one and offer אֹתוֹ him for a trespass (guilt) offering אֶת and the log (2/3 pint) of oil and wave אֹתָם them as a wave offering before יהוה . C-MATS

Question: How is the offering waved? The Kohen lifts the living lamb and the oil and waves them toward the four directions, to the One Who is Master of all directions. He raises them upward and then lowers them, to the Master of heaven and earth. (Chumash)



Lamb bound and ready to wave before יהוה

13 And he will kill אֶת the lamb in the consecrated place where he kills אֶת the sin [offering] אֶת and the burnt offering. The sin offering and trespass offering is the priests portion, it is most sacred: **14** And the priest will take some of the blood of the trespass offering and put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and the big toe of his right foot: **15** And the priest will take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand: **16** And will dip the priest אֶת his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand and will sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before יהוה: **17** And the rest of the oil that is in his hand, the priest will put on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the trespass offering: **18** And the remnant of the oil that is in the priest's hand, he will pour upon the head of him who is to be cleansed: and the priest will make atonement for him before יהוה . C-MATS

19 And will offer the priest **את־הַחַטָּאת** *the sin [offering]* and make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness; and then he will kill **את־** the burnt offering: 20 And will offer the priest **את־** the burnt offering **ואֶת־** and the grain offering upon the altar: and the priest will make atonement for him and he will be clean. 21 And if he *is* poor and cannot afford *much*; then he can take one lamb for a trespass offering to be waved to make an atonement for himself and $1/10$ deal (2 quarts) of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering and a log ($2/3$ pint) of oil; 22 And two turtledoves or young pigeons, as he is able to afford; and one *bird* will be a **חַטָּאת** *sin [offering]* and the other a burnt offering. 23 And he will bring **אתָם** *them* on the eighth day for his cleansing to the priest to the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation before יהוה. 24 And will take the priest **את־** the lamb for the trespass offering **ואֶת־** and the log ($2/3$ pint) of oil and the priest will wave **אתָם** *them* as a wave offering before יהוה: 25 And he will kill **את־** the lamb for the trespass (guilt) offering and the priest will take *some* of the blood of the trespass offering and put *it* on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot: 26 And the priest will pour *some* of the oil into the palm of his own left hand: 27 And the priest will sprinkle with his right finger *some* of the oil that *is* in his left hand seven times before יהוה: 28 And the priest will put the oil that is in his hand upon the tip of the right ear of him who *is* to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot on the *same* place as the blood of the trespass offering: 29 And the rest of the oil that *is* in the priest's hand, he will put on the head of him who is to be cleansed to make atonement for him before יהוה. 30 And he will offer **את־** one of the turtledoves or young pigeons, as he can afford; 31 *whatever* **את** such as he is able to afford, **את־** one for a **חַטָּאת** *sin [offering]* **ואֶת־** and the other for a burnt (ascent) [offering] along with the grain offering: and the priest will make atonement for him who is to be cleansed before יהוה. 32 **זֹאת** *This is the Torah* for him who has sickness and is not able to afford *the usual elements used* for his cleansing. C-MATS

Question: Why the right ear, thumb, and toe? Blood is placed on these three body parts to symbolize that henceforth the metzora must improve himself in mind (ear), deed (thumb, representing action), and effort (big toe, representing forward movement). (Chumash)

33 And יהוה spoke to Moses and to Aaron saying, 34 When you enter the land of Canaan, which I will give to you for a possession and I put a plague on a house in the land of **אֶתְכֶם** *your possession*; 35 and he that owns the house will come and tell the priest saying, It seems to me a plague is in the house. C-MATS

Question: Why was the plague placed on a person's house? Tzara'at-type afflictions on houses are clearly supernatural occurrences. Obviously, their appearance is for a purpose. These tzara'at afflictions are Divine punishments for selfish behavior and gossip. יהוה mercifully begins by afflicting property -- first houses and then garments -- then, if the victim does not draw the proper lesson and repent, he will be stricken by an affliction on his body. His sin was the selfish feeling that the house is his and that there is no obligation on him to share his blessings with anyone else. He thinks that his property is his alone, acquired solely through his own efforts, and that no one else is entitled to enjoy the benefits of his personal success. But the house and the money and the success are יהוה given! The same יהוה who gave him what he has, wants him to share with others, and יהוה can easily give him more or take away what he is misusing. (Chumash)

THE POW!ER OF WORDS

Question: We all walk around carrying a powerful secret weapon - our power of speech. In fact, ancient Hebrew sources teach that speaking properly - by not gossiping, slandering, or speaking badly of others (even if it's true) - besides being the right thing to do, is a powerful way to spiritually protect ourselves and others from all sorts of problems and dangers. Gossip harms not only the one spoken about, but also the speaker and listeners. How do you think that could be? Whether we're aware of it or not, gossip is a form of cruelty and conditions those who say it - and those who listen without objection - to become crueler people, and there's no greater spiritual harm than that.

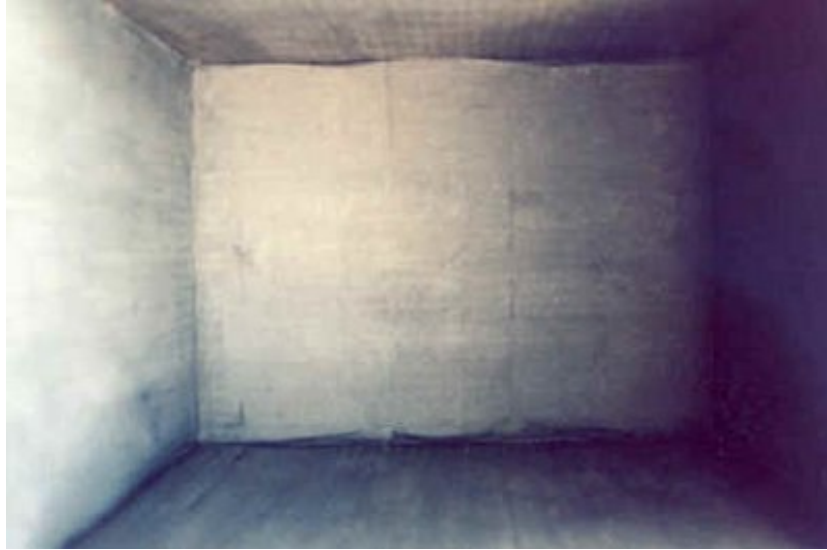
Question: The tongue holds the power of life and death. What do you think this means? Even though it may seem harmless - our tongue - that is the way we use it by speaking - can, if used in a positive way, make down-and-out people feel alive again, or if used cruelly can hurt people so much it's almost like killing them!

Question: יהוה judges us the way we judge others. What do you think this means? יהוה treats us measure for measure, (such as how we behave down here is how we are treated above), it follows that if we don't speak badly of others, then this damaging spiritual gossip can't happen above. It's a deep concept, but the main thing to know is that one of the best, and most practical things we can do for ourselves and for others is to avoid gossip and negative speech.

Discuss: What are you misusing that יהוה may take away from you? How are you being selfish with what יהוה has given you?

Question: What is the order of affliction of tzara'at to produce repentance? First the plague comes upon his house. If he repents, it requires only the removal of affected stones; if not, it requires tearing down the entire house. Then the plagues come upon one's clothes. If he repents, they require washing; if not, they require burning. Then the plagues come upon his body. If he repents, he undergoes cleansing; if not, "He shall dwell alone" and be removed from his people. (Chumash)

36 Then the priest will command that they empty את- the house before the priest goes into it to see את- the plague, so that all that is in the house is not made unclean: and then the priest will go to see את- the house. C-MATS



Empty the house

Question: Why does the law say to empty the house? This is why the Torah commands to remove everything from the afflicted house before the Priest arrives. Otherwise, if the house requires shutting up, all that is inside immediately becomes impure. (Chumash)

37 And he will examine את the plague and *if the plague is on the walls of the house and greenish or reddish depressions appear to be lower than the wall;* 38 Then the priest will go out of the house to its door and shut up את the house seven days. C-MATS



Shut up the House

Question: What may happen if you have a wicked neighbor? Woe to the wicked and woe to his neighbor! If the afflicted wall is shared between two homes, both must take out the stones, both must scrape the walls, and both must bring the new stones. (Chumash)

Discuss: How does associating with unbelievers bring discomfort and pain to our life?

39 And the priest will come again *on the seventh day* and will examine the plague *to see if it has spread in the walls of the house*; **40** Then the priest will command that they take away אֶת־ the stones where the plague *is* and they will take them to an unclean place outside the city: **41** אֶת־ And the house he will cause to be *thoroughly scraped within the inside of* and they will pour out אֶת־ the dust that they scrape off *the house* outside the city to an unclean place: **42** Finally they will take other stones and put *them* in the place of those *infected* stones; and he will take other mortar and will plaster אֶת־ the house. C-MATS



Mold and Mildew on the walls of a home

43 And if the plague comes again and breaks out in the house after he has taken away אֶת־ the *infected* stones and after he has scraped אֶת־ the house and after it is plastered; **44** Then the priest will examine to see *if* the plague has spread in the house, *it is* a contagious plague in the house: *it is* unclean. **45** And he will break down אֶת־ the house אֶת־ the stones of it אֶת־ and the timber thereof אֶת־ and all the mortar of the house; and he will carry them outside the city to an unclean place. **46** Also he that goes into the house while it is shut up אֹתוֹ *he (him)* will be unclean until the evening. **47** And he who lies in the house will wash אֶת־ his clothes; and he that eats in the house will wash אֶת־ his clothes. **48** And if the priest shall come in and look *upon it* and, behold, the plague has not spread in the house, after *it* was plastered אֶת־ the house: then shall declare clean the priest אֶת־ the house, because the plague is healed. **49** And he will take two birds, cedar wood, scarlet *yarn* and hyssop *leaves* to cleanse אֶת־ the house: **50** And he will kill אֶת־ the bird, אֶת־ the one in an earthen vessel over running water. C-MATS

51 And he will take **את** wood, the cedar **את** and the hyssop leaves, **את** and the scarlet yarn **את** and the living bird and dip **אתם** them in the blood of the slain bird and in the running water and sprinkle the house seven times: 52 And he will cleanse **את** the house with the blood of the bird, the running water, the living bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop leaves and the scarlet yarn: 53 But he will set free **את** bird, the living one out of the city into the open fields and make atonement for the house: and it will be clean. 54 **זאת** This is the Torah for all manner of plagues and sores, 55 And for the plague of a garment and of a house, 56 And for a swelling and for a scab and for a bright spot: 57 To determine when it is unclean and when it is clean: **זאת** this is the Torah for the plague. C-MATS

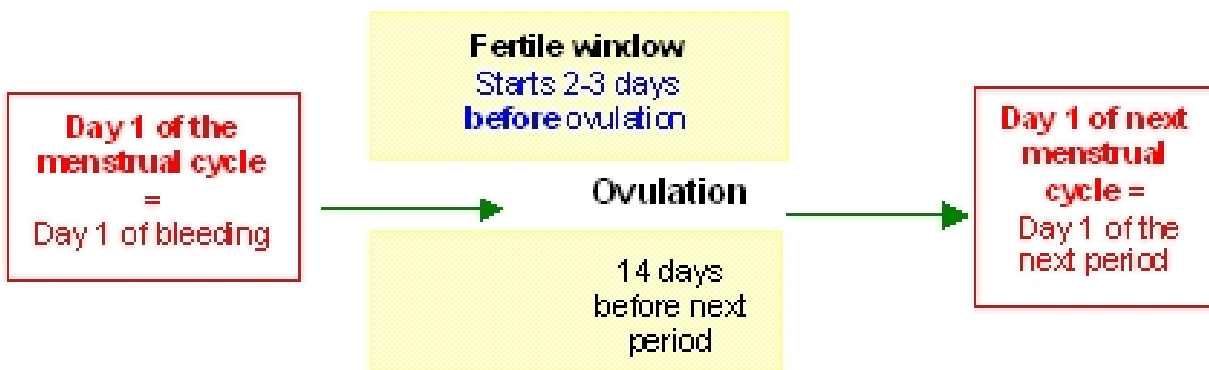
Leviticus 15:1 And **יהוה** spoke to Moses and to Aaron saying, 2 Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them, When any man has a discharge from his body, or his discharge is unclean. 3 **זאת** And this shall be his discharge is unclean whether it keeps running from his body with **את** his discharge or has stopped, he is unclean. 4 Every bed on which he lies that has the discharge is unclean: and everything on which he sits will be unclean. 5 And whoever touches his bed must wash his clothes and wash himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 6 And he who sits on anything on which he sat that has the discharge must wash his clothes and wash himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 7 And he who touches the body of him who has the discharge must wash his clothes and wash himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 8 And if he who has the discharge spits on him who is clean; then the clean man must wash his clothes and wash himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 9 And a saddle on which he rides that has the discharge will be unclean. 10 And whoever touches anything that was under him will be unclean until the evening: and the person who carries **אתם** them must wash his clothes and wash himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 11 And whoever has the discharge and has not washed his hands in water, whoever he touches must wash his clothes and bath himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 12 And the clay pot that is touched by the one who has the discharge will be broken: and every pot of wood will be washed water. 13 And when he who has a discharge is cleansed; then he will count seven days for his cleansing and wash his clothes and bath his body in running water and he will be clean. 14 And on the eighth day he will take two turtledoves or young pigeons and come before **יהוה** to the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation and give them to the priest: 15 And the priest will offer **אתם** them, one for a **חטאת** sin [offering] and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest will make atonement for him before **יהוה** for his discharge. 16 And if a man has a seminal emission, then he must wash in water **את** all his body and be unclean until the evening. 17 And every garment and leather which has the seminal emission will be washed with water and be unclean until the evening. C-MATS



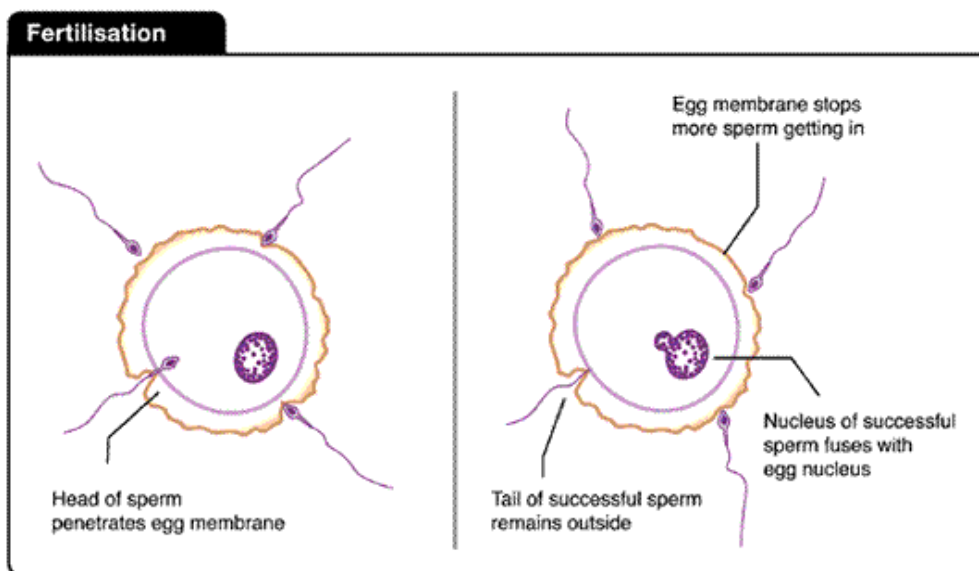
Husband and wife

18 The woman *also* whom shall lie with the **אתה** man (*him*) has sexual relations, they will both wash *themselves* in water and be unclean until the evening. 19 And if a woman has a discharge and the discharge from her body is blood, she will be set apart seven days: and whoever touches her will be unclean until the evening. 20 And everything that she lies on in her separation will be unclean: everything that she sits on will be unclean. 21 And whoever touches her bed must wash his clothes and wash in water and be unclean until the evening. 22 And whoever touches anything that she sat on must wash his clothes and wash in water and be unclean until the evening. 23 And if it *is* on *her* bed or on anything on which she sits, when a person touches it he will be unclean until the evening. 24 And if any man lies **אתה** with *her* and her menstrual flow touches him, he will be unclean seven days; and the bed on which he lies will be unclean. 25 And if a woman has an discharge of blood many days not during her period or if it lasts beyond the *normal* time of her period; all the days she is having an unclean discharge, she will be just as in her *normal* period: she *will be* unclean. C-MATS

יהוה's plan is perfect

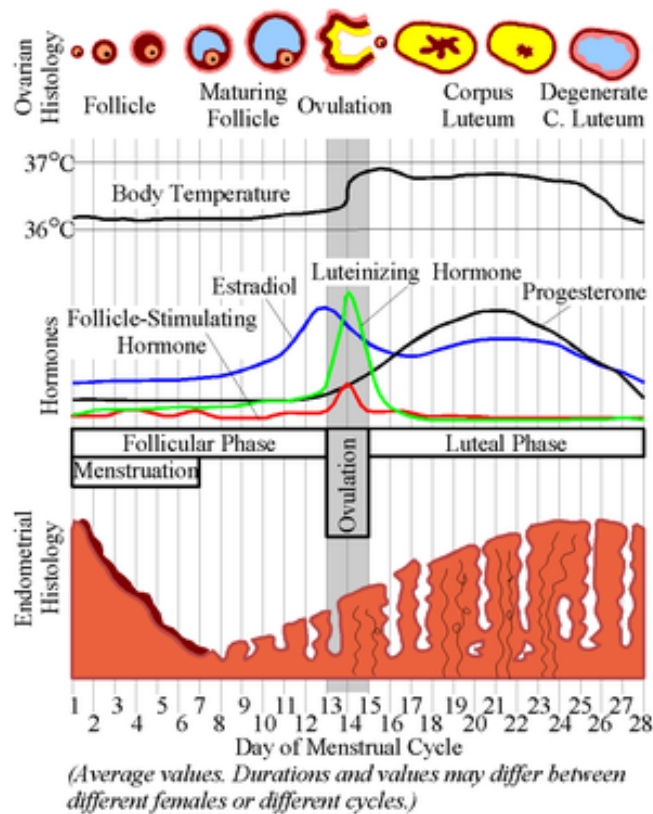


29 day cycle – ovulation occurring around Day 15

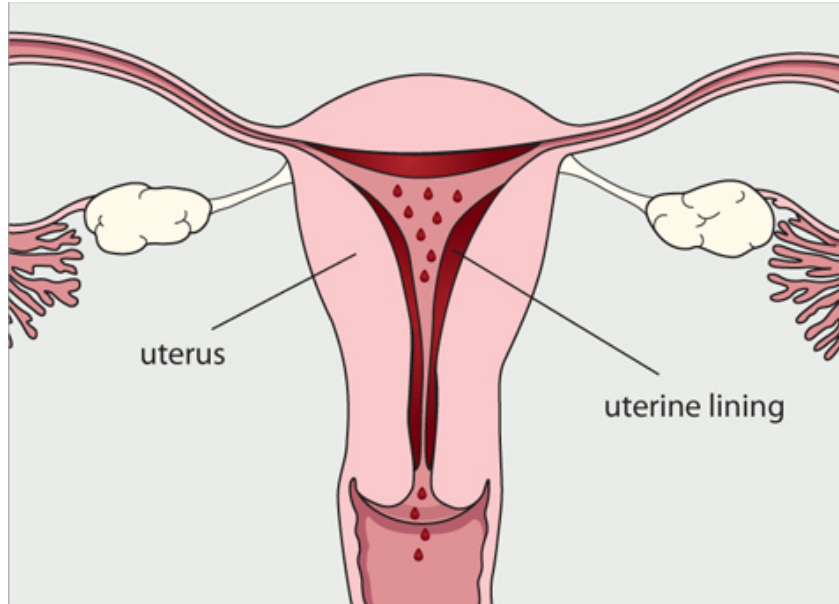


Question: When is the best time for conception? A woman's period usually lasts from 3-5 days. A woman's fertile period during her menstrual cycle starts around day 13-14, with ovulation being around day 15. The egg has a short life-span of about 24 hours. Before ovulation, the cervix produces a special mucous for about 3 to 9 days. This mucous is as crucial to fertility as ovulation because without it, the male's sperm cannot survive nor be transported inside the female to fertilize the eggs. When mucous is present, it nourishes and protects sperm allowing them to live for 3 to 5 days.

Question: Why do women have so many mood changes? Notice the change of temperature in the body and hormone levels before ovulation?



Question: What happens during the woman's menstrual cycle? In the first half of the cycle, levels of estrogen (the "female hormone") start to rise. Estrogen also makes the lining of the uterus (womb) grow and thicken. This lining of the womb is a place that will nourish the embryo if a pregnancy occurs. At the same time the lining of the womb is growing, an egg, or ovum, in one of the ovaries starts to mature. At about day 14 of an average 28-day cycle, the egg leaves the ovary. This is called ovulation. After the egg has left the ovary, it travels through the fallopian tube to the uterus. Hormone levels rise and help prepare the uterine lining for pregnancy. A woman is most likely to get pregnant during the 3 days before or on the day of ovulation. A woman becomes pregnant if the egg is fertilized by a man's sperm cell and attaches to the uterine wall. If the egg is not fertilized, it will break apart. Then, hormone levels drop, and the thickened lining (of blood) of the uterus is shed during the menstrual period.



Uterus shedding lining of blood

26 Every bed on which she lies while she has a discharge will be like the bed during her *normal* period: and whatever she sits on will be unclean, just like the uncleanness during her period. 27 And whoever touches those things will be unclean and must wash his clothes and wash himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 28 But if she is cleansed of her discharge, then she will count seven days and after that she will be clean. 29 And on the eighth day she will take two turtledoves or young pigeons and bring אותם *them* to the priest to the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation. 30 And will offer the priest את־ one for a חטאת *sin offering* ואת־ and the other for a burnt [offering] and the priest will make atonement for her before יהוה for the discharge of blood. 31 You will separate את־ Children of Israel from their uncleanness, so that they will not die in their uncleanness when they defile את־ My Tabernacle (*mishkan*) that is among them. 32 זאת־ This is the Torah of him who has a discharge and seminal emission that makes him unclean; 33 And of her that is sick of her menstrual impurity and of him that has a discharge, את־ and of him that has an issue, of the man and of the woman and of him that lies with her that is unclean. C-MATS



James 1:26 If any man among you seems to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain. 27 Pure religion that is undefiled before Elohim and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. C-MATS

Galatians 5:13 For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14 For all the Torah is fulfilled in one word, even in this; You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another. C-MATS

Psalms 15:1 יהוה, who shall dwell in Your Tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Your Holy Hill? 2 He that walks uprightly and works righteousness and speaks אמת truth in his heart; 3 He that slanders not with his tongue, nor does evil to his friend, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor; 4 In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, אמת and them that fear יהוה He honors; He that swears to his own hurt and changes not; 5 He that puts no interest on his money, nor takes reward against the innocent. He that does these things shall never be moved. C-MATS

Psalms 34:11 Come, children, listen to me: I will teach you the אמת fear of יהוה. 12 What man is he that desires life and loves many days that he may see good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deviousness. 14 Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. 15 The eyes of יהוה are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of יהוה is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. C-MATS

Proverbs 6:16 There are six things which יהוה hates; yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: 17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue and hands that shed innocent blood; 18 A heart that devises wicked purposes, feet that are swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness that utters lies and he that sows discord among brethren. C-MATS

Proverbs 12:18 There is one that speaks rashly like the piercings of a sword; but the tongue of the wise is health. 19 The lip of אמת truth shall be established forever; but a lying tongue is but for a moment. C-MATS

Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue; and they that love it shall eat the fruit there. C-MATS

Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise utters knowledge properly; but the mouth of fools pour out folly. 3 The eyes of יהוה are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good. 4 A gentle tongue is a tree of life; but perverseness therein is a breaking of the spirit. C-MATS

Proverbs 16:1 The plans of the heart belong to man; but the answer of the tongue is from יהוה. 2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but יהוה weighs the spirits. 3 Commit your works to יהוה and your purposes shall be established. C-MATS

Proverbs 17:28 Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise; when he shuts his lips, he is esteemed as prudent. C-MATS

Proverbs 21:23 Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles. C-MATS

1 Peter 3:10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no deviousness: 11 Let him avoid evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and follow it. 12 For the eyes of יהוה are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of יהוה is against them that do evil. C-MATS

Do You Know?

1. If a person was unclean, he had to live ___ the camp.
2. The unclean person could come back in the camp after he washed his ____, shaved off his ____, and bathed with ____.
3. The blood of the sacrifice and the oil brought by a person being cleansed by the priest was placed on the person's right ____, ____, and ____.
4. The priest sprinkled the oil on the person being cleansed ___ times and poured the remainder of the oil on his ____.
5. The person being cleansed could bring a clean ___ that he could afford as a sacrifice to יהוה.
6. A house is unclean if ___ or ___ tzara't is found in the house. (What color?)
7. When a man or woman has a bodily ____, the person is unclean.
8. When a man has an emission of semen, he is unclean until ____.
9. A man must not have intercourse with his wife during her ____.
10. A male child is circumcised on the ___ day.
11. A woman who has given birth to a male child is unclean for ___ days.
12. A woman who has given birth to a female child is unclean for ___ days.
13. Skin disease is found on a person that has spoken ___ against his neighbor.
14. We should never listen to ____.
15. How many times did a priest examine a person before he pronounced him unclean?
16. Do not judge others by their first _____. Give them a chance.
17. The effects of sin can show up in your financial, mental, social, or ____ condition.
18. The unclean person must tear his ____, cover his __ and ____, and cry "____, ____."
19. The unclean person was placed in ____ outside the camp.
20. What 7 sins bring sickness on a person?

Answers:

1. Outside
2. clothes, hair, water
3. ear, thumb, toe
4. seven, head
5. animal
6. green, red
7. discharge
8. evening
9. period
10. 8th
11. 40
12. 80
13. slander
14. gossip
15. twice
16. appearance
17. physical
18. clothes, head and mouth, unclean, unclean
19. isolation
20. slander (gossip), bloodshed (murder), false oath (lying), incest, robbery, envy, pride

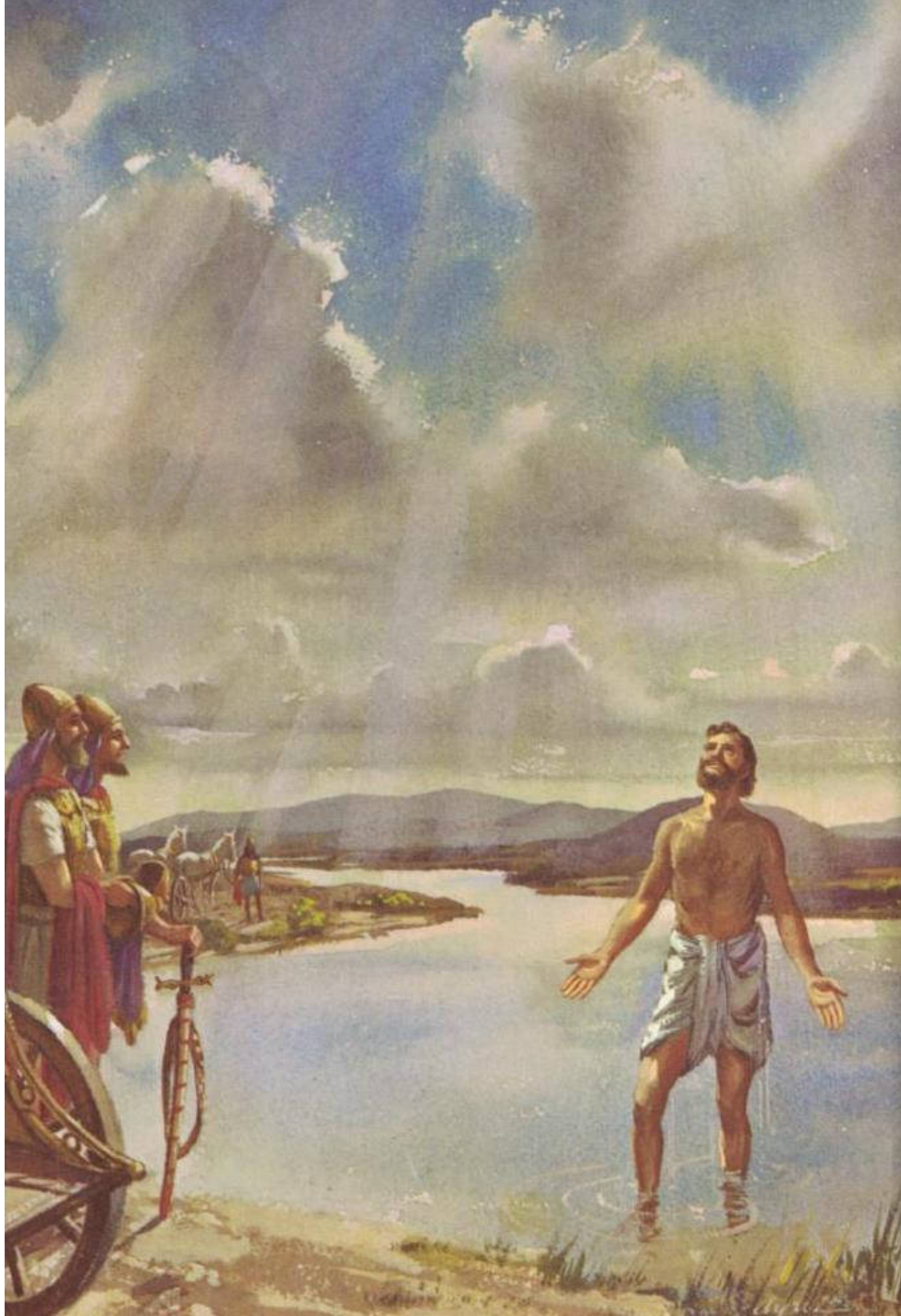
Haftorah

2 Kings 4:42 42 And there came a man from Baal-shalisha and brought the man of Elohim bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley and full ears of corn in the husk of it. And he said, Give to the people that they may eat. 43 And his servant said, What אַתָּן shall I give this to hundred men? He said again, Give to the people that they may eat for so says יהוה, they will eat and have some left. 44 So he set it before them and they ate and had some left, according to the word of יהוה. **2 Kings 5:1** Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and honorable, because by him יהוה had given deliverance to Syria: he was also a mighty man in valor, *but he was a leper.* 2 And the Syrians had gone out by companies and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a young female; and she waited on Naaman's אִשָּׁת wife. 3 And she said to her mistress, Would to Elohim my master were with the prophet that is in Samaria! He would heal אֶתְּךָ him of his tzara'at (*leprosy*). 4 And one went in and told his master, saying, So and so said, The maid that is of the land of Israel. 5 And the king of Syria said, Go now and I will send a letter to the king of Israel. And he departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold and ten changes of garments. 6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying now when this letter is come to you, See, I have with it sent to you אֶתְּךָ Naaman my servant, that you may recover him of his tzara'at. 7 And it came to pass, when he had read, the king of Israel אֶתְּךָ the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, Am I Elohim, to kill and to make alive, that this man does send to me to recover a man of his tzara'at? Therefore, consider, please and see how he seeks a quarrel against me. 8 And it was so, when Elisha the man of Elohim had heard that he had rent, the king of Israel אֶתְּךָ his clothes that he sent to the king saying therefore, Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel. C-MATS



Elisha's messenger tells Naaman to wash in the Jordan River

9 So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. 10 And Elisha sent a messenger to him saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times and your flesh will come again to you and you will be clean. 11 But Naaman was furious and went away and said, See, **אמרת** *I said* he would certainly come out to me and stand and call on the name of יהוה his Elohim and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper. 12 *Are* not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. 13 And his servants came near and spoke to him and said, My father, *if* the prophet had bid you *to do some* great thing, would you not have done *it*? How much more then, when he said to you, Wash and become clean? C-MATS



Naaman is healed in the Jordan river

14 Then he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of Elohim: and his flesh came again like to the flesh of a little child and he was clean. **15** And he returned to the man of Elohim, he and all his company and came and stood before him: and he said, See, now I know that *there is* no Elohim in all earth, but in Israel: now therefore, please, take a blessing **בְּאֵת** from your servant. **16** But he said, As **יְהוָה** lives, before which I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take *it*; but he refused. C-MATS



Elisha Refusing Gifts from Naaman

17 And Naaman said, Will there not then, please, be given to your servant two mules loaded with dirt? For your servant will never again offer neither burnt *offering* nor sacrifice to other gods, but to יהוה. **18** In this thing יהוה pardon your servant, *that* when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there and he leans on my hand and I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon: When I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, יהוה pardon your servant in this thing. **19** And he said to him, Go in peace. So he departed מֵאֵתוֹ *from him* a little way. C-MATS



2 Kings 7:3 And there were four leprosy men *at* the entrance of the gate: and they said one to another, Why do we sit here until *we* die? 4 If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine *is* in the city and we will die there: and if we sit here, we *will* die also. Now therefore, come and let us fall to the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we will live; and if they kill us, we will die anyway. 5 And they rose up in the twilight, to go to the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the outskirts of the camp of Syria, see, *there were no men there*. 6 For Adonai had made to hear אֶת־ host of the Syrians a noise of chariots and a noise of horses, *even* the noise of a great army: and they said one to another, Lo, has hired against us, the king of Israel אֶת־ kings of the Hittites אֶת־ and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. 7 Therefore, they rose up and fled in the twilight and left אֶת־ their tents אֶת־ and their horses אֶת־ and their donkeys, *even* the camp as it was and fled for their life.



8 And when these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drink and carried from there silver and gold and garments and went and hid *it*; and came again and entered into another tent and carried from there *also* and went and hid *it*. 9 Then they said one to another, We are not doing what is right: this day *is* a day of good tidings and we remain silent: if we wait until the morning light, *some* trouble will come upon us: now therefore, come that we may go and tell the kings household.



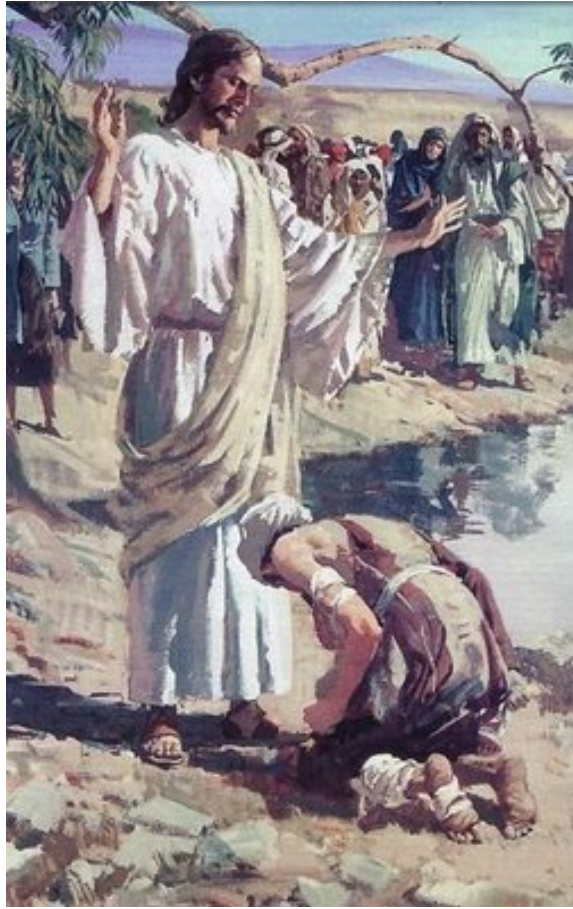
10 So they came and called to the porter of the city: and they told them saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians and see, there were no men there, neither the voice of men, but horses and donkeys were tied and the tents as they *were*. 11 And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within. 12 And the king rose in the night and said to his servants, I will now show you *what* אַתְּ the Syrians have done to us. They know that we *are* hungry; therefore, they have gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying when they come out of the city, we will catch them alive and get into the city. 13 And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, please, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, see, they *are* as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: see, I say, they *are* even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed: and let us send and see. 14 They took therefore, two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying Go and see. 15 And they went after them to the Jordan: and, lo, all the way *was* full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned and told the king. 16 And the people went out and spoiled אַתְּ tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was *sold* for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of יהוה. 17 And the king appointed אֶתְּ the officer on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trampled upon him in the gate and he died, as the man of Elohim had said who spoke when the king came down to him. 18 And it came to pass as the man of Elohim had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel and a measure of fine flour for a shekel will be tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria: 19 And answered that officer אֶתְּ man of Elohim and said, Now, behold *if* יהוה should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, you will see *it* with your eyes, but will not eat of it. 20 And so it fell out to him: for the people trampled upon אֶתְּ *him* in the gate and he died. C-MATS

Brit Chadasha

Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue. 2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. 3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. 4 Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers Elohim will judge. 5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for he has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. 6 So that we may boldly say, Adonai is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. C-MATS

Matthew 9:20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: 21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. 22 But Y'shua turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, **Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.** 23 And when Y'shua came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, 24 He said unto them, **Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleeps.** And they laughed him to scorn. 25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. 26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land. C-MATS





Yahusha heals the man with tzara'at

Matthew 8:1 When he came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. **2** And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Master, if you will, you can make me clean. **3** And Y'shua put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, **I will; be you clean.** And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. **4** And Y'shua saith unto him, **See you tell no man; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.** C-MATS

Matthew 11:2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Mashiach, he sent two of his disciples, **3** And said unto him, Are you he that should come, or do we look for another? **4** Y'shua answered and said unto them, **Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see: 5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.**

Luke 2:22 And when the days of her purification according to the Torah of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to יהוה; **23** As it is written in the Torah of יהוה, Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to יהוה; **24** And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the Torah of יהוה, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. C-MATS

Take a Harder Look at Yourself

Discuss: Are you thinking you are better than others? Are you thinking your way is the best way? Do you humble yourself and do what יהוה wants you to do?

Psalms 31:23 O love יהוה אֱתֶּךָ, all His saints: יהוה preserves the faithful and plentifully repays him that deals proudly. 24 Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you that hope in יהוה. C-MATS

Proverbs 8:12 I, wisdom have made prudence my dwelling and find out knowledge *and* discretion. 13 The אֵתֶּךָ *fear of* יהוה is to hate evil: Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth, do שׂנְאֵתִי I hate.

Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes shame; וְאֵתֶּךָ *and with the* humble is wisdom. C-MATS

Proverbs 13:10 By pride comes only contention; וְאֵתֶּךָ *and with the* well-advised is wisdom. C-MATS

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. 19 Better *it is to be of a* lowly spirit *and* אֵתֶּךָ humble, than to divide the spoil *with* אֵתֶּךָ arrogant. 20 He that gives heed to the word shall find good; and whoever trust in בִּיהוּהוּ, happy is he. C-MATS

Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride shall bring him low; but he that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honor.

2 Chronicles 32:24 In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. He prayed to יהוה, who answered him and gave him a miraculous sign. (and healed him) 25 But Hezekiah's heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him; therefore יהוה's wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. 26 Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem; therefore יהוה's wrath did not come upon them during the days of Hezekiah. C-MATS

Psalms 101:5 Whosoever secretly slanders his neighbor, אֶתֶּךָ *him* will I destroy: Him that has a high look and a proud heart, אֶתֶּךָ *him* will I not endure. 6 My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land that they may dwell with me: He that walks in a perfect way, he shall minister to me. 7 He that works deceit shall not dwell within My house: He that speaks falsehood shall not be established before My eyes. C-MATS

Psalms 138:6 For though יהוה is high, yet has He respect to the lowly; but the haughty He knows from afar. C-MATS

Proverbs 15:25 יהוה will root up the house of the proud; but He will establish the border of the widow. 26 Evil devices are an abomination to יהוה but pleasant words *are* pure. C-MATS

Proverbs 16:5 Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to יהוה: *Though* hand *joins* in hand, he shall not be unpunished. 6 By mercy וְאֵמֶת *and truth* iniquity is atoned for; and by the fear of יהוה men depart from evil. C-MATS

Proverbs 18:12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty; and before honor *goes* humility. C-MATS

Proverbs 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but יהוה weighs the hearts. 3 To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to ליהוה than sacrifice. 4 A high look and a proud heart, even the lamp of the wicked, is תנא sin. C-MATS

Romans 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. C-MATS

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. C-MATS

2 Timothy 3:2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slandorous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of יהוה- 5 having a form of righteousness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. C-MATS

2 Chronicles 26:16 But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to יהוה his Elohim, and entered the temple of יהוה to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of יהוה followed him in. 18 They confronted him and said, "It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to יהוה. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by יהוה." 19 Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in יהוה's temple, tzara'at broke out on his forehead. 20 When Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had tzara'at on his forehead, so they hurried him out. Indeed, he himself was eager to leave, because יהוה had afflicted him. 21 King Uzziah had tzara'at until the day he died. He lived in a separate house -leprous, and excluded from the temple of יהוה. C-MATS

Humility

Isaiah 2:11 The lofty looks of man shall be brought low and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down and יהוה alone shall be exalted in that day. 12 For there shall be a day to ליהוה of צבאות Hosts upon all that is proud and haughty and upon all that is lifted up; and it shall be brought low; . C-MATS

Isaiah 13:11 And I will punish the world for *their* evil and the wicked for their iniquity: and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. C-MATS

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to יהוה. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to יהוה and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before יהוה, and he will lift you up. C-MATS

1 Peter 5:5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "יהוה opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under יהוה's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. C-MATS

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. C-MATS

Selfishness

Galatians 5:19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of יהוה. C-MATS

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. C-MATS

Judge Fairley

Question: Should we give others a second chance? A wise person doesn't judge people or things by the way they first appear. In this week's Torah portion, we learn how the Hebrew priests wouldn't judge whether a person had a spiritual sickness called tzara'at until they had examined him twice. We can learn from this that one should be willing to give people and situations a 'second look' before passing judgment about them.

A FAIR HEARING

I don't know why, but I sort of took it on myself to be the neighborhood 'welcoming committee.' Whenever a new kid moves in and shows up on the scene, I make the effort to say 'hello' and help her blend in with the crowd. So it really wasn't unusual for me to go up to this new kid, Allison, (I asked one of the teachers what her name was) and give her one of my smiley 'welcome to the neighborhood' speeches. What *was* unusual was how the kid reacted to me - or should I say *didn't* react... "Hi Allison!" I had said to her in a loud, friendly voice, walking up to her from behind. The kid didn't say anything or even turn her head.

Okay, I know some kids are the more shy, quiet type (not like me!) so I figured I'd try again. "Welcome to the world's greatest neighborhood!" I said, in a big friendly voice - sure this time she'd turn around and smile. But she didn't even turn around and just kept on walking away from me, I think even faster than before. Now if there is one thing I can't stand it's a snob. And this Allison kid just made it into my book as Snob #1. As far as I was concerned, she could just stay by herself forever, if that's how she wanted it. I certainly wasn't going to be the one to make her feel at home. The next day when I saw her sitting on a bench in the playground looking really lonely, my first thought was, 'it serves her right!' After all, I gave her the chance to make a friend and she obviously didn't want to see my face. I walked past her, about to join the gang, when - I don't know why - something about her lonely look got to me and I figured maybe she just had a bad day yesterday and what would it hurt to give her one more chance? Things aren't always the way they first look. So I walked back her way, only this time I made sure to walk straight up to her, so if she wanted to do her 'snob' thing again, she'd have to do it right to my face. "Hi," I said, giving her a little wave. I thought she'd either turn her head or look embarrassed after yesterday, but this surprising kid surprised me once again by giving me a warm, friendly smile back and inviting me to sit down! We traded names (I knew hers already, but it was only polite) and soon we got chatting friendly enough that I felt okay to ask her why she hadn't answered me back the day before. But before I could do that, she gave me the answer in a way that made me glad I hadn't asked... "Oh, Debby," she said "I'm sorry, but could you please make sure you look straight at me when you talk. You see," she smiled sort of uncomfortably "I'm hearing impaired and I have to read people's lips to have any idea what they're saying and to see their faces to even know if they're talking to me at all." Wow - that explained everything! She didn't ignore me because she was a snob or even shy. She just didn't hear or notice me because I never caught her eye! Well, Allie and I are just about best friends now. She's a great, down to earth kid. I think a lot about how close I came to writing her off as a snob - which would have been a big shame for both of us, and how glad I am that I was smart enough to give her a second look.

Question: Is there ever a time we shouldn't judge someone favorably? The Torah has specific guidelines about when we should and when we shouldn't, and we'll gain a lot by learning these. But a good general rule of thumb is to try to give people the benefit of the doubt whenever we can.

Question: What life-lesson do you think someone could learn from this story? Often, our first impressions of people or situations can be inaccurate. A wise person is willing to withhold judgment and give things a second look.

Question: Can we ever be sure that how we look at things is true? While it's smart not to jump to conclusion and to give people and things a second look, that doesn't mean we can't understand how things are or rightfully decide that they're true. **יהוה** put definite truths in the world and gave us the ability to perceive them when we honestly try.

The Secret Weapon

Question: How can we protect ourselves from all sorts of problems? We all walk around carrying a powerful secret weapon - our power of speech. In fact, ancient Hebrew sources teach that speaking properly - by not gossiping, slandering, or speaking badly of others (even if it's true) - besides being the right thing to do, is a powerful way to spiritually protect ourselves and others from all sorts of problems and dangers. This week's Torah portion teaches how at one time, יהוה would give people a special type of warning when they were speaking improperly, so they could correct themselves. Today, we must rely on paying careful attention to what we say, and trying our best to use the 'secret weapon' of our tongues, to speak only good and bring good things into our lives.

"SWEET TOOTH"

Sometimes you meet people in the strangest places. For instance, who would have thought that the dentist's office could turn into a school reunion? Well I certainly didn't, as I sat in Dr. Cushing's waiting room last Wednesday afternoon. Despite my toothache, I was starting to relax to the mellow music playing in the background, and about to dive into one of my favorite magazines as I waited for my appointment. Suddenly I heard a familiar sounding voice speaking to the receptionist. I looked up, and got a real blast from the past.

"Sherry Leavitt, is that really you?!" I cried out. My old school friend wheeled around, and after a few seconds of trying to recognize me, got the picture and flashed me a smile so bright that it made me wonder what she was doing at the dentist at all. "Hey Fran," she said, "I can't believe it. Did you move back to town?" I laughed. "No such luck, I just came in for this dentist's appointment. My mom always says that if you find a good dentist, you don't give him up even if you have to travel half-way around the world." I eagerly sat down next to my old friend who I hadn't seen in a couple of years and put down what I was reading. Surely the latest gossip from the old neighborhood would be much more interesting than anything the magazine had to offer. Sherry had only come in for a check-up and cleaning, and was really happy to see me. She spoke animatedly about the weather, what she has been learning in school and books. But every time I would bring up a name from the old days, and inquire about the latest juicy news, Fran seemed to look uncomfortable and tried to change the subject. What was going on? Finally, I couldn't take it anymore. "Sherry, are you hiding something from me?" I burst out. "I've been waiting two years to hear something juicy, and now all you can tell me is that everyone's fine?" My friend looked at me and said something that I don't think I'll ever forget. "Well, you see Fran, lately, I've decided not to talk so much about other people. It seems as if almost always, somehow or other, something gets said that's embarrassing or hurtful. So I try to find less dangerous things to speak about."

By now, my mouth was open so wide that I had forgotten about my toothache. I felt kind of disappointed to realize I wasn't going to be getting any gossip, but I guess I could see her point. Any gossip worth listening to had to have at least a little dirt in it. But there was one thing I still didn't get... "Sherry, what do you mean about speaking about 'dangerous' things?" I asked. "Well I mean, I learned that when we hold back from saying anything bad about other people, יהוה brings good things - into our lives, the life of who we're talking to, and the person we didn't gossip about. Good things that we wouldn't want to miss out on. I figure that's worth giving up a juicy bit of gossip for, don't you?" I certainly couldn't argue with her there. "Have you seen it help?" I asked.

Sherry smiled. "I can't say for sure, but I can tell you that since I stopped gossiping or putting anybody down, I've seen a lot of good things come into my life. But even more than that, I feel like it's made me into a nicer, better person." Maybe it was Sherry's words, or her winning smile, but somehow I knew she was right. As I put my hand up to my sore tooth, I decided then and there to pay more attention not only to what I put into my mouth from now on, but also what would come out of my mouth as well.

Question: Why being put in quarantine was a good way to cure someone of *tzara'at*, the gossip disease? When a person is by himself he can think about why he shouldn't speak that way. Also he can feel how important it is to be with other people and why we shouldn't isolate ourselves from others by speaking badly about them.

Question: There is an expression, "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Based on our story and discussion would you agree or disagree with this? It's not true. Words can hurt a lot. Even though it's not physical pain, the emotional pain can sometimes be even worse.

Question: Do you think there's anything wrong with saying bad things about people if you know it's true? Just because something is true, we don't have to gossip about it. Besides, it's possible that we really didn't get our facts straight, and it's not really true. The world will become a better place if we use our power of speech to build others up and not to put them down.

Give Your Best

Question: Should we expect different things from different people? Are all people created exactly the same and produce the same results? In the times of the Temple, a person who spoke badly about other people would get a bad skin disease. The Torah tells us what he would have to do to get cured. One of the things would be to bring the Kohanim, the Hebrew priests, a gift to offer to יהוה. But not everybody had to bring the same kind of gift. יהוה knew that it would be harder for poor people to bring a big expensive gift. So he told them to bring just a small one and He would consider it as good as if it was a big one. We see from here that sometimes we expect different things from different people depending upon who they are and what they have to give.

'A' FOR EFFORT

Teddy and Simon were brothers, but you would never know it. Teddy was a real "brain," an A student who was always near the top of his class, without even trying. Simon was a nice kid. But even though he tried hard, his grades were usually nothing special, to say the least. On report card day the boys came running into the house with their report cards: "Look Mom -- almost all A's ... as usual," said Teddy. Simon shyly handed his mom his report card. While it wasn't nearly as good as his brother's, it was his best report card ever. "You both did wonderful," their mother exclaimed. I'm going to call your father at work and tell him." The boys ran outside to play. That evening when their dad came home he had two gift-wrapped boxes in his hand. He called over the boys. When Teddy opened his gift he saw a new pen. When Simon opened his, he saw a new super-chrono watch. "Congratulations on your special report cards," their Dad said, smiling.

Teddy started turning red. Finally he couldn't control himself and burst out, "It's not fair! Why should Simon get a better prize than me? I got a better report card than he did." His parents frowned and called Teddy into the next room to speak to him. "Teddy," his Dad said, "I can understand how you feel. But in a way, Simon's report card was even better than yours." "What do you mean?" asked Teddy. "I got mostly A's and just a couple of B's. Simon got some B's and a lot of C's." His father looked Teddy in the eyes. "You and Simon are different," he said. "יהוה gave each of you different abilities. Because you're different, Mom and I expect different things from you. Simon spent more time, and worked a lot harder on his assignments than you did. He really made the most of his abilities, and that's what counts. Do you understand, Teddy?" "I think so," he said. "If I used all of my abilities I would be able to do even better than I did -- I could get straight A's. Right?" His parents smiled as Teddy turned to leave the room. "Where ya' headed?" asked his mom. "I'm going upstairs to go do my homework, and this time give it all I've got."

Question: Why were the boys' parents more impressed with who tried harder rather than the end results? Because only our effort is something we can control. Our "natural" abilities -- such as how smart we are -- are something we are born with. So the only real measure of a person's accomplishments is whether he works hard to make the most of his abilities.

Question: If different people have different abilities and talents, can we say that "all people are created equal"? All people are not the same in every way. Some are much stronger, richer or smarter than others. But we are all equal in that we all have the equal chance to make the most of ourselves, based upon the abilities and circumstances that we do have.

Question: Who should feel better: someone who succeeds at something without trying, or someone who tries his best but fails? It might seem as if the one who succeeds has more to feel good about, after all he succeeded. But true success in life isn't measured by how much we accomplish, rather by how hard we try, so actually the one who tries his best is the real success.

Question: How can we know whether or not we are fulfilling our potential? We should ask ourselves two questions: Is what we are trying to do both worthwhile, and suited to our nature and abilities? Are we putting in our best effort? If the answer to both of these questions is 'yes,' we can be pretty confident that we are on the right track in life.

Question: A man once said, 'When I stand before יהוה, He isn't going to ask me why I wasn't as great as Moses; He is going to ask me whether I was as great as myself.' What do you think that statement means? Each of us has a different potential, our own set of abilities and challenges. יהוה knows this, as He is the one who gave them to us. The man was teaching that our spiritual goal is not to measure ourselves against someone else - in this case, Moses, who might well have had a greater potential than he did, but rather to measure ourselves against ourselves. That is, ask ourselves whether we are accomplishing all we can according to our unique potential. That is all that יהוה asks of us, and that is what we should ask of ourselves.

Ugly Speech

Question: What is so bad about a little gossip? It may not seem like it, but gossiping and speaking badly about others is one of the meanest things a person could do. In the times of the Bible this was obvious, because when someone would do it he or she would break out in an awful, ugly skin disease - as this week's Torah portion describes. Today we have to be extra careful to refrain from negative, ugly speech. Gossiping isn't good for the speaker, listener, or for the one spoken about.

THE GOOD - THE BAD - AND THE UGLY

Bus rides can be boring. After playing license-plate rummy, count-the-trucks and all the other goofy 'ride games' they knew, Amy and her sister Ann - on the way to visit their out-of-town grandma on her birthday - were plenty bored. That is, until a couple of passengers across the aisle caught their attention. It was two old ladies, chatting away a-mile-a-minute in some foreign language. Ann tapped Amy on the shoulder and gave her one of those 'check this out' looks. Her sister got the hint and the two of them fixed their eyes on what promised to be good entertainment for the rest of the trip - or until the old ladies got off, whichever came first. "Hey, what in the world do you think they're talking about so fast?" whispered Ann, with a mischievous grin. "Probably they don't even know themselves." Amy shot back, a little louder than she'd planned. "Shhh!" winced Ann. "They'll hear us." Her sister waved her off. "Genius - if they knew English, don't you think they'd be speaking normally instead of jabbering away in that mumbo-jumbo?" The two of them broke out in giggles and the rest of the trip flew by as the two girls had a great time entertaining themselves by commenting on how ugly the old ladies were - of course, making sure each time to turn their eyes away from the ladies, who would have no idea the joke was on them. "Check out the one on the right's hairstyle - she looks just like a French Poodle," snickered Ann. "Hey, don't insult dogs!" quipped Amy. "At least Poodles don't dress in those ugly outfits that look like nineteenth century used-clothing store rejects!" As they got to the bus stop near their grandma's house, the sisters, a little disappointed that the 'show' was over, jumped out of their seats. They were giggling too hard to notice that the ladies across the aisle were slowly getting up too and the girls were already off the bus and much too far away to notice in what language the ladies thanked the bus driver. "Hi Grandma - we're here!" shouted an excited Amy. "Happy birthday to you!" Ann sing-songed right behind. "So nice to see you!" their grandmother smiled warmly. "Come on in. I'm so happy you could come." She led them to a pretty little table where she had set up some of her patented yummy cookies and some nice cold drinks. The doorbell rang. "Oh, you girls enjoy yourselves," Grandma said. "I'll get the door. I invited two of my dearest friends to join us," she smiled. "I have to show off my beautiful, sweet grandchildren, you know."

As the girls were digging in, they half-listened to their grandma greet the guests in the foyer. "How was your trip, dears?" she asked. "Well, thankfully the bus wasn't crowded, I just wish young people today spoke a bit more respectfully," sighed one of the guests, with pain in her voice. "I know what you mean," said the girls' grandmother. "Come in, it's all over now. Anyway, you'll meet my beautiful granddaughters." The three ladies came into the living room as Ann and Amy put on their best 'greet-the-guests' smiles - which quickly melted into looks of embarrassed shock. Grandma's best friends - speaking *perfect* English - were the two ladies from the bus! They had understood all the terrible things they'd said about them!!! The girls bounced on the edge of their seats, nervously waiting for the ladies to spill the beans and tell their grandma how awful they'd acted.

Ann and Amy couldn't help noticing that the ladies wouldn't look them in the eyes and how quickly they would change the subject whenever Grandma started to brag about 'her beautiful, polite granddaughters.' There was no question they'd recognized them, but amazingly the whole party passed and they didn't say a word about what happened. As everyone got up to leave and Grandma got up to get the ladies' sweaters, the two girls looked at the ladies, who were now staring right at them. "Um, we're really sorry," muttered Ann. "Yeah ... and thanks for not telling Grandma," Amy added. "We learned long ago that no good ever comes from badmouthing people - even if they can't hear you," said one of the women softly. "And we hope one day soon you will too," added the other. The girls didn't say anything but they both knew in their hearts they had learned that very lesson that day and realized just how beautiful Grandma's friends were and just how ugly they themselves had been.

Question: What life lesson do you think the girls learned from what happened? One thing they learned was you can never be sure if people hear what you're saying. But even more, they learned - from how their grandmother's friends didn't speak badly about them even though they could have - how beautiful speech is what makes someone beautiful, and how gossipy speech does just the opposite.

Question: In your opinion, is there anything wrong with simply listening to someone's gossip? In fact, yes. Besides giving the gossipier an audience - which is wrong - even hearing and especially believing badmouthing and gossip, makes a person less spiritual and kind.

Question: The negative use of one's power of speech is one of the most destructive and anti-spiritual acts that there is. How do you understand this? Our most powerful and uniquely human ability is our power of speech. A fist can only harm someone within reach. A gun or even a bomb has limited range. But words, either spoken or written, can travel anywhere and leave a permanent impact either for good or for bad.

Question: Do you think one should be free to say whatever he wants, no matter how negative, in the name of free speech? Why or why not? Free speech means that the individual is free to apply his own values to determine whether or not something is appropriate to say. It doesn't mean that he is ethically free to say harmful and destructive words.

Question: Are harmful words really as dangerous as weapons? It is nearly impossible to overemphasize the damage that can be done with words. A physical illness or injury has its limits, but the feeling of pain and humiliation caused by words can haunt a person his entire life, and even for generations to come. Human beings are unique in that we communicate through the spoken (and written) word. Speech is our most powerful tool and must be used with only the greatest of care.

Question: In your opinion, does a person have the responsibility to always speak the truth even when he or she is saying negative things about others? Certainly truth is an important value, which shouldn't be taken lightly. However, just because something is true, it does not always have to be said, and certainly truth should never be used as an excuse to damage others. In general, when it would hurt others, many things are best left unsaid. Expressions of negativity even when true usually do more harm than good. Besides this, we would be surprised to find out how many times negative things we perceive in others are really illusions based upon misunderstandings.

Resources:

The Stone Edition of The Chumash

The Complete Messianic Aleph Tav Scriptures C-MATS www.AlephTavScriptures.com

“Weekly Torah Portion” from www.aish.com