The Leper Messiah
Leviticus 14 as a model for God's plan of redemption
From **Yahoo! Answers:**

**Christians: which is your least favorite book of the Bible?**

**Best Answer**

Going postal answered 5 years ago

I would say either Leviticus or Numbers. Both are a very slow read and are more about rules than anything else.

**Like:** Don’t sleep with your mother or don’t sleep with an animal...so restrictive, ugh

**Other Answers (13)**

Bill I answered 5 years ago

Ok...i'll be honest..lol..i say Leviticus..kind of hard to get into
What are the signs of the Messiah?
Matthew 11:2-6

And when Yoḥanan had heard in the prison of the works of Messiah, he sent two of his taught ones and said to Him, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”

And Yeshua answering, said to them, “Go, report to Yoḥanan what you hear and see:

“Blind receive sight and lame walk, lepers are cleansed and deaf hear, dead are raised up and poor are brought the Good News.”

Ref: Isaiah 35.5-6, 29:18, 61:1-2
R. Joshua b. Levi pointed out a contradiction. It is written, in its time \[the Messiah will come\], whilst it is also written, \[I will hasten it! if they are worthy, I will hasten it: if not, [he will come] at the due time\]. R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua opposed two verses: it is written, And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven whilst [elsewhere] it is written, [behold, thy king cometh unto thee... ] lowly, and riding upon an ass! \[he will come\] with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon an ass. if they are meritorious, \[he will come\] with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon an ass.

King Shapur [I] said to Samuel, `Ye maintain that the Messiah will come upon an ass: I will rather send him a white horse of mine.` He replied, `Have you a hundred-hued steed?`

R. Joshua b. Levi met Elijah standing by the entrance of R. Simeon b. Yohai`s tomb. He asked him: `Have I a portion in the world to come?` He replied, `if this Master* desires it.` R. Joshua b. Levi said, `I saw two, but heard the voice of a third.` He then asked him, `When will the Messiah come?` `Go and ask him himself,` was his reply. `Where is he sitting?` `At the entrance. And by what sign may I recognise him?` `He is sitting among the poor lepers`
The Rabbis said: His name is `the leper scholar,` as it is written, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God, and afflicted.”

**Isaiah 53:4**

Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him **stricken**, Smitten by God, and afflicted.
... It has been taught, R. Nehemiah said: In the generation of Messiah’s coming impudence will increase, esteem be perverted, the vine yield its fruit, yet shall wine be dear, and the Kingdom will be converted to heresy with none to rebuke them. This supports R. Isaac, who said: The son of David will not come until the whole world is converted to the belief of the heretics. Raba said: What verse [proves this]? It is all turned white: he is clean.

The footnote in the Talmud reads: Lev. XIII, 13. This refers to leprosy: a white swelling is a symptom of uncleanness; nevertheless, if the whole skin is so affected, is it declared clean. So here too; when all are heretics, it is a sign that the world is about to be purified by the advent of Messiah

Purification from leprosy is seen as a sign of the coming of Mashiyach
Luke 4:16-30

There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage.
Why is the curing of “leprosy” a sign of the coming of Messiah?
What is Biblical Leprosy?

• Hansen's Disease? - A bacteria that can affect the skin, nerves, eyes, and limbs.

• Biblical Tsarat - Causes scales and patches on skin. Can occur on clothing and in houses

• Greek 'lepra' does not designate leprosy, but scale or parchment (the Greek word for 'book' is liber)

• The word for leprosy in Greek is 'elephantiasis'
Numbers 12:1, 10-13

Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother’s womb
The Living Dead

• Numbers 12:10-13
• Signs of mourning for death
  • Tearing clothes - Lev 10:6, 21:10, Gen 37:34, 2 Sam 1:11
  • Covering the mustache - Ezekiel 24:17, 22
  • Expulsion from the camp -> similar to karat, loss of blessings and protection
• Josephus states “And for the lepers, he suffered them not to come into the city at all, nor to live with any others, as if they were in effect dead persons” (Ant., 3:261–9).
Contracting *Tsrat*

Biblical cases of contraction:

- **Exodus 4:6-7** Mosheh  
- **Numbers 12:10-15** Miriam  
- **2 Kings 5** Elisha's servant  
- **2 Chronicles 26:19-21** Uzziah  
- **Acts 9** Sha'ul

What is the common factor in all of these?

**REBELLION AGAINST AUTHORITY**

Homiletically interpreting the word *mezora* as connected with *mozi shem ra*, "the person guilty of slander or libel," the rabbis regarded leprosy primarily as a divine punishment for this evil.
Should any Israelite ever contracted Leprosy?

- Exodus 15:26
- Deuteronomy 7:12-15
- Deuteronomy 28:15, 27
The Original Sin

• Adam and Chavah challenged God's authority with the serpent
• As a result, their physical appearance changes (naked)
• Once inspected/interrogated by YHVH, they are sent OUTSIDE the garden => experiencing a living death
• They are promised restoration through birth
• Mankind is now "quarantined" for 7000 years
According to the Biblical record, how is “leprosy” cured?
Purification of the Leper

Three distinct stages

• Day 1 - 'Scape-bird' ritual
• Day 2-7 - outside the house, bathing
• Day 8 - re-integration into the covenant
Mishnah Nega’im 14.2

It comes out that there are three [stages of] purifications in regard to a leper, and three [stages of] purifications in regard to one who gives birth.
R. Joshua b. Levi said: A man who is childless is accounted as dead, for it is written, Give me children, or else I am dead. And it was taught: **Four are accounted as dead:** A poor man, a leper, a blind person, and one who is childless. A poor man, as it is written, for all the men are dead [which sought thy life]. A leper, as it is written, [And Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold, she was leprous. And Aaron said unto Moses...] let her not he as one dead. The blind, as it is written, He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. And he who is childless, as it is written, Give me children, or else I am dead.
Critical Thinking

What other 8 day rituals do we have in the Bible that may be similar to the purification of the leper?

• Induction of the priesthood
• Circumcision of a newborn male child
Rites of Passage

Rites of Separation
- Separation from the old
  - Death & rebirth (symbolic)
  - Purification from old self
  - Leaving the old ways

Rites of Transition
- Preparation for incorporation
  - Isolation from normal society
  - Training period
  - Trials and test
  - “set apart”
  - Typically 7 days (but not always)
  - State of ambiguity

Rites of Incorporation
- Integration into the new
  - Sacrifice often involved
  - Consecration into new, renewal
  - New name given
Leper is Cured – Impurity is Cleansed

• Removal of demonology and magic

• From Mesopotamian Aakki Marsuti:

\[\text{He cannot sleep. He cannot rest. He has caused his god concern. Marduk noticed. “Whatever I know, go my son. Take a white goat of Dumuzi, lay it near the sick person. Remove its heart and place it in the hand of the [sick] man. Recite the incantation of Eridu, wipe the man with the goat whose heart you removed and with bread and dough. Pass censer and torch alongside of him. Dump the materials in the street and draw a circle of flour around that man.”} \]
Day 1 - Separation

• Scape-bird ritual
  • Two living (wild) birds, cedar wood, crimson yarn, hyssop, living water, and an earthen vessel are brought.
  • One of the living birds is slaughtered over the living water so that its blood falls into the bowl.
  • The remaining living bird along with the cedar wood, crimson yarn, and hyssop are dipped in the bowl of blood and living water.
  • The fluid mixture from the earthen vessel is sprinkled seven times on the metsora and he is pronounced “clean” (tahor).
  • The living bird is released into an ‘open’ field
Day 1 - Separation

• The *metsora* (one to be cleansed):
  • Washes his clothes
  • Shaves off his hair
  • Bathes himself
  • And now is “clean“

• The *metsora* is now allowed in the camp but cannot enter his tent for 7 days
Day 2-7 - Transition

• The *metsora* is able to interact in society but is forbidden from entering his own tent.

• Day 7
  • Shaves off all his hair:
    • Head
    • Beard
    • Eyebrows
  • Washes his clothes
  • Bathes in water
  • He is now “clean”[Implied that he can now enter his own tent]
Day 8 - Incorporation

• Purification ritual at the Temple
  • Brings 2 male lambs, 1 female lamb, 3/10 ephah of flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and 1 log of oil
  • Alternatively, if poor: 1 male lamb, 2 turtledoves or pigeons, 1/10 ephah of flour for a grain offering, and 1 log of oil

• The *metsora* meets the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting.
Day 8 - Incorporation

- The priest offers one of the lambs as an *ashram* guilt offering along with the log of oil (same for the poor person)
  - The lamb (male) is slaughtered in the location of the *chatta’t and olah* offerings
  - The blood of the *asham* is placed on the right earlobe, thumb, and big toe of the metsora
  - The oil is sprinkled 7 times “before YHVH” with the priest’s right finger
  - Some of the remaining oil is placed on top of the blood on the metsora’s ear, thumb, and toe
  - The remainder of the oil is poured over his head.
The Tabernacle

Cf. Mt. Sinai
Importance of boundary maintenance
Day 8 - Incorporation

- The priest next makes *kipper* on behalf of the *metsora*.
  - The *chatta’ot* lamb (female) is offered to make *kipper* on behalf of the *metsora*.
  - The *olah* lamb (male) is offered along with the grain offering (*minchah*).
  - The poor person substitutes the two birds for these offerings.
Overall Effect of Leviticus 14

• One who was dead is now returned to life
• Restoration to the covenant
• Purification from unclean to cleanliness
“Mortal, can these bones live?”
The Leper Messiah

“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
- Yeshua (Matt 15:24)

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”
- Yeshua (Mark 2:17)
The Leper Messiah

Luke 17:11-19

10 lepers healed

Only 1 returns
And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.
Shabbat Shalom!
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