



## Leviticus - Chapter Fourteen

### **IV Leviticus 11:1-15:33 - The Laws on Cleanness and Uncleanness (continues)**

#### **IV.d Leviticus 13:1-14:57 - Leprous Diseases and Their Purification (continues/concludes)**

#### **Summary of Chapter Fourteen**

This chapter gives the prescribed purificatory rite for the person healed of a specific skin disease called *tsara'at* (14:1-32) along with the purificatory rite for an afflicted house (14:33-53).

#### **IV.d.ii Leviticus 14:1-57 - Purification of Lepers and Leprous Houses**

Refer to the chapter summary above.

#### **IV.d.ii.A Leviticus 14:1-32 - Laws for Cleansing Lepers**

Chapter 13 told how an unclean person is consigned to a place outside the camp. Verses 1-32 of this chapter explain the processes that allow a person to be readmitted into the covenant community of God's people.

<sup>1</sup> The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>2</sup> This shall be the ritual for the leprous person at the time of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest; <sup>3</sup> the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall make an examination. If the disease is healed in the leprous person, <sup>4</sup> the priest shall command that two living clean birds and cedar wood and crimson yarn and hyssop be brought for the one who is to be cleansed. <sup>5</sup> The priest shall command that one of the birds be slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel. <sup>6</sup> He shall take the living bird with the cedar wood and the crimson yarn and the hyssop, and dip them

and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. <sup>7</sup> He shall sprinkle it seven times upon the one who is to be cleansed of the leprous disease; then he shall pronounce him clean, and he shall let the living bird go into the open field. <sup>8</sup> The one who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, but shall live outside his tent for seven days. <sup>9</sup> On the seventh day he shall shave all his hair: of head, beard, eyebrows; he shall shave all his hair. Then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean.

### Leviticus 14:1-9

The priest shall command that two living clean birds. In this cleansing ceremony, one bird was killed in an earthen vessel over running water, and its blood was applied to a living bird, to some cedar wood, to some crimson fabric, and to some hyssop. Then, using these things, the blood was sprinkled on the one who was cleansed from leprosy. Then, the living bird was let go. This seems to be a picture of Jesus' death and its spiritual application; a heavenly being, just as a bird is 'of the heavens', dies in an earthen vessel, while remaining clean because of the running water. The death of the bird is associated with blood and water: <<*This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth*>> (1 John 5:6); the blood is connected with life, i.e. applied to the living bird, and then applied to the one cleansed.

Cedar wood, crimson yarn, and hyssop all seem to have cleansing properties: <<*The priest shall take cedar wood, hyssop, and crimson material, and throw them into the fire in which the heifer is burning*>> (Numbers 19:6), and are thus used in this two-bird ritual. The release of a live bird into the wilderness is reminiscent of the scapegoat being led out in Leviticus 16:6-10, although it was expected to die. The live bird being driven into the fields may symbolise the patient's disease being carried outside the camp of Israel.

Cedar is extremely resistant to disease and rot, and these qualities may be the reason for including it here, as well as a symbolic reference to the wood of the Cross. Some even think the Cross Jesus was crucified on was made of cedar. The connection with hyssop is also important. Jesus was offered drink from a hyssop branch on the Cross: <<*A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth*>> (John 19:29), and when David said: <<*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean*>> (Psalm 51:7a), he admitted that he was as bad as a leper.

On the seventh day he shall shave all his hair: of head, beard, eyebrows; he shall shave all his hair. After the sacrificial ceremony with the birds, the cleansed leper had to wash his clothes and shave off all of his hair. He could start all over again as if they were a brand new baby. This seems to be an illustration of being born again: <<*Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again”*>> (John 3:3 NIV), which is so much more than a completely new start.

<sup>10</sup> On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish, and a grain-offering of three-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, and one log of oil. <sup>11</sup> The priest who cleanses shall set the person to be cleansed, along with these things, before the Lord, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. <sup>12</sup> The priest shall take one of the lambs, and offer it as a guilt-offering, along with the log of oil, and raise them as an elevation-offering before the Lord. <sup>13</sup> He shall slaughter the lamb in the place where the sin-offering and the burnt-offering are slaughtered in the holy place; for the guilt-offering, like the sin-offering, belongs to the priest: it is most holy. <sup>14</sup> The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt-offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot. <sup>15</sup> The priest shall take some of the log of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand, <sup>16</sup> and dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand and sprinkle some oil with his finger seven times before the Lord. <sup>17</sup> Some of the oil that remains in his hand the priest shall put on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt-offering. <sup>18</sup> The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed. Then the priest shall make atonement on his behalf before the Lord: <sup>19</sup> the priest shall offer the sin-offering, to make atonement for the one to be cleansed from his uncleanness. Afterwards he shall slaughter the burnt-offering; <sup>20</sup> and the priest shall offer the burnt-offering and the grain-offering on the altar. Thus the priest shall make atonement on his behalf and he shall be clean.

#### Leviticus 14:10-20

This final series of sacrifices, focusing on cleansing at the sanctuary, restores the patient to full fellowship as a member of the covenant community. When the three

standard offerings are presented: the sin-offering, the burnt-offering, and the grain-offering, then the person has full restoration.

He shall take two male lambs without blemish. In completing the sacrifices for the cleansed leper, offerings were made on the eighth day and sacrificial blood was applied to the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe, to sanctify and consecrate the cleansed leper. This was the same way that the priest was consecrated; refer to Leviticus 8:23.

Originally an Egyptian term, an ephah was a Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to approximately one bushel or about 33 litres.

The log of oil was a liquid measure believed to be less than half a pint.

Some of the oil that remains in his hand the priest shall put on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed. On the eighth day, oil was also applied to the cleansed leper. It was both sprinkled on his body in general and then applied to the ear, thumb, and toe just as the blood was. Each of these places on the body was meant to be anointed with oil. Therefore, a cleansed leper had a special calling and a special anointing. One could not go through such a ritual as this and not be changed.

Since leprosy is a picture of sin, it can be seen just how this ritual has spiritual application to every sinner set free by Jesus. Since leprosy had no natural cure, it was certain that this ritual was rarely performed, and when it was performed at the command of Jesus (Luke 5:12-14), it must have been a great testimony to the priests at the temple.

<sup>21</sup> But if he is poor and cannot afford so much, he shall take one male lamb for a guilt-offering to be elevated, to make atonement on his behalf, and one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain-offering, and a log of oil; <sup>22</sup> also two turtle-doves or two pigeons, such as he can afford, one for a sin-offering and the other for a burnt-offering. <sup>23</sup> On the eighth day he shall bring them for his cleansing to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, before the Lord; <sup>24</sup> and the priest shall take the lamb of the guilt-offering and the log of oil, and the priest shall raise them as an elevation-offering before the Lord. <sup>25</sup> The priest shall slaughter the lamb of the guilt-offering and shall take some of the blood of the guilt-offering, and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot. <sup>26</sup> The priest shall pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand, <sup>27</sup> and shall sprinkle with his right finger some of the oil that is in his left hand

seven times before the Lord. <sup>28</sup> The priest shall put some of the oil that is in his hand on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot, where the blood of the guilt-offering was placed. <sup>29</sup> The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed, to make atonement on his behalf before the Lord. <sup>30</sup> And he shall offer, of the turtle-doves or pigeons such as he can afford, <sup>31</sup> one for a sin-offering and the other for a burnt-offering, along with a grain-offering; and the priest shall make atonement before the Lord on behalf of the one being cleansed. <sup>32</sup> This is the ritual for one who has a leprous disease, who cannot afford the offerings for his cleansing.

#### Leviticus 14:21-32

These sacrifices are a concession to the poor who cannot afford the animals of vv.10-20. Birds are substituted for the expensive large animals, and the amount of grain required is two-thirds less than the normal amount. Refer to the comments made on Leviticus 12:8.

#### IV.d.ii.B Leviticus 14:33-57 - Laws for Cleansing Houses

These laws regarding leprous disease in houses anticipate the time when Israel will settle in the Land of Canaan and the people will be living in houses. Houses may become infected with disease; this latter term is a general word that may refer to things such as mould, mildew, and fungus. These are unclean and dangerous, and therefore must be eradicated. The priest determines what course of action is to be taken when such a problem occurs.

<sup>33</sup> The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: <sup>34</sup> When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession, <sup>35</sup> the owner of the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, 'There seems to me to be some sort of disease in my house.' <sup>36</sup> The priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest goes to examine the disease, or all that is in the house will become unclean; and afterwards the priest shall go in to inspect the house. <sup>37</sup> He shall examine the disease; if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface, <sup>38</sup> the priest shall go outside to the door of the house and shut up the house for seven days. <sup>39</sup> The priest shall come again on the seventh day and make an inspection; if the disease has spread in the walls of the house,

<sup>40</sup> the priest shall command that the stones in which the disease appears be taken out and thrown into an unclean place outside the city. <sup>41</sup> He shall have the inside of the house scraped thoroughly, and the plaster that is scraped off shall be dumped in an unclean place outside the city. <sup>42</sup> They shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and take other plaster and plaster the house.

#### Leviticus 14:33-42

There seems to me to be some sort of disease in my house. Just as with the instructions regarding leprosy in garments in Leviticus Chapter 13, this uses a broad defining of leprosy that can include fungus and mould infestations. These instructions helped promote hygienic dwellings in Israel.

<sup>43</sup> If the disease breaks out again in the house, after he has taken out the stones and scraped the house and plastered it, <sup>44</sup> the priest shall go and make inspection; if the disease has spread in the house, it is a spreading leprous disease in the house; it is unclean. <sup>45</sup> He shall have the house torn down, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house, and taken outside the city to an unclean place. <sup>46</sup> All who enter the house while it is shut up shall be unclean until the evening; <sup>47</sup> and all who sleep in the house shall wash their clothes; and all who eat in the house shall wash their clothes. <sup>48</sup> If the priest comes and makes an inspection, and the disease has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, the priest shall pronounce the house clean; the disease is healed. <sup>49</sup> For the cleansing of the house he shall take two birds, with cedar wood and crimson yarn and hyssop, <sup>50</sup> and shall slaughter one of the birds over fresh water in an earthen vessel, <sup>51</sup> and shall take the cedar wood and the hyssop and the crimson yarn, along with the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times. <sup>52</sup> Thus he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the fresh water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar wood and hyssop and crimson yarn; <sup>53</sup> and he shall let the living bird go out of the city into the open field; so he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.

### Leviticus 14:43-53

He shall have the house torn down. If the cleansing process fails then the whole structure is to be destroyed, the building materials removed outside of the camp and destroyed so that the corruption cannot spread to other dwellings. This may seem a harsh process for the owner of the property but the view taken was always in the best interest of both the individual and the community.

<sup>54</sup> This is the ritual for any leprous disease: for an itch, <sup>55</sup> for leprous diseases in clothing and houses, <sup>56</sup> and for a swelling or an eruption or a spot, <sup>57</sup> to determine when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the ritual for leprous diseases.

### Leviticus 14:54-57

This is the ritual for any leprous disease. These final verses form a simple summary statement for the processes outlined above.