

## THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER REVEALS THE GOSPEL!



Out of all the stories in Scripture that hint at the gospel of the Messiah, this one ranks up there in the top four along with the story of Joseph, Jonah, and the binding of Isaac. But if you ask theologians around the globe to pick their favorite Old Testament foreshadowing of Christ, I doubt that the *cleansing of the leper* would even make the top 20. But as we shall see shortly, this incredible instruction found in

the Torah could not point more perfectly to the beautiful story of our Messiah Yeshua laying down His life for us almost 2000 years ago. So put your dive suits on and let's go into the deep!

First of all, it's important to know that in Bible times, leprosy was pretty serious stuff. This contagious disease created open sores on the body which would result in a loss of feeling and eventually amputation of that appendage. Biblical law forced people with this disease to live in communities outside the camp. If they ever came in close contact with a regular person, they were to cry out to them, "**Unclean! Unclean!**" to warn them of their condition (Leviticus 13:45).

In Hebrew, the word "**unclean**" is *tame* (pronounced 'taw-mey'). In the Scriptures, the main use for this word deals with ceremonial uncleanness. Whether someone has leprosy, has touched a dead body, is on their menstrual period, or is recovering from childbirth, *tame* expresses the idea that they are not approved to touch or enter areas deemed holy or clean. The reason for this is that the temple and its surrounding areas are the perfect representation of life, purity, and holiness. Anything connected with death or deformity in humans cannot be allowed to enter into His presence since He is a holy, perfect, and awesome God. It is for the same reason that He does not allow sin into heaven: it would immediately pollute His presence. When someone is "unclean," they are not allowed to come before the throne.

### CLEAN AND UNCLEAN

Although many Christians do not believe that the laws of clean and unclean still exist today, they are very much alive, well, and in full effect. In Matthew 5:23-24, Yeshua said that if you come before the altar to bring an offering and remember that you have aught against your brother or

your brother has aught with you, you are to *leave your gift* and go make things right with your brother first. Why? Because that unforgiveness creates a state of uncleanness that is forbidden in the presence of the Almighty. Also, no one is allowed to enter His gates outside of the fact that they are cleansed by the blood of Christ. This is simple Torah Law. The Law has not changed. One must still have "**clean hands and a pure heart**" to stand in His mighty presence.



If a man has committed sin against Yahweh or his neighbor, it must be made right by the blood of the Lamb in order for him to be clean again. This is why we are commanded to first go to our neighbor and do our best to make it right. Then we're commanded to repent before the Lord, asking forgiveness through the blood of the High Priest Yeshua. The state of the heart of repentance combined with the act of attempting restoration causes us to have clean hands and a pure heart, thus changing our status from **unclean (*tame*)** to **clean (*tahor*)**.

With all that in mind, let's dive into the text here in Leviticus and see these incredible parallels. Once the person with leprosy comes before the priest to be cleansed, the following is the formula to make him *legally* clean:

*"[T]hen the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. 5 And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. 6 As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. 7 And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field. 8 He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that, he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent for seven days. 9 But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head*

*and his beard and his eyebrows—all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean." - Leviticus 14:4-9*

There's no denying that this is a strange recipe for cleansing. But when we look a bit more carefully and expose the Creator's original intent and the types and shadows, what was hidden becomes revealed.

First of all, we have **two** clean birds. One is killed and its blood spilled into a vessel of living water. Then, the living bird is bound with the cedar wood, scarlet thread, and hyssop and dipped into the vessel that contains the blood of the sacrificed bird and the living water. Once the process is complete, the living bird, which is now covered with water and blood, is set free from captivity, and allowed to fly into the heavens for which it was created. Now that we have all the elements, let's watch this incredible shadow of Christ unfold right before our eyes.

At first glance, this might seem like a very strange recipe for cleansing someone infected with leprosy. But when you realize that every single ingredient here is found in the gospel story, it comes to life. Take a look at the following scriptures and watch the mosaic become crystal clear:

## **THE SCARLET ROBE**

- *Matthew 27:27-28* - Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. 28 And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him.

## **THE HYSSOP**

- *John 19:28-29* - 28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said "I thirst!" 29 Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth.

## **BLOOD AND WATER**

- *John 19:34* -But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.
- *John 7:38* - "He who believes in Me, as the Scriptures has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

## **THE BIRD**

- *Luke 3:22* - And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

## PUTTING ALL THIS TOGETHER

The implications of all this are amazing. Just like the bird in Leviticus had to die so the other bird could live, so it is in what Christ did for us. The dove landed upon Him, choosing Him to be the divine "bird" that would sacrifice His life for the other "bird"(mankind) made in His image. That divine "dove" then gave His life as a clean vessel, willingly allowing them to cause His blood and water to flow. It is *this* blood that becomes the "living water" in which we must be immersed (baptized) in order to be set free from the law of sin and death. Just like the living bird was required by law to be wrapped in cedar, hyssop, and scarlet and immersed into the living water and blood, so we must be "**crucified with Christ**" (Galatians 2:20), "**take up [our] cross, and follow [Him]**" (Matthew 16:24), and be "**baptized into His death**" (Romans 6:3). If we are to be set free from the curse of death we deserve for breaking His Holy Word, then we must walk the same road that He walked. We must be wrapped in His scarlet robe, drink from the bitter hyssop branch of life and persecution, have our hands nailed to that cedar beam, and be baptized into the fountain of living water that flows from His veins. *Like the bird in Leviticus, to be free is to be covered by the blood and the living water.* Only then can we be free to fly into the heavens and become who we were truly created to be. And when He says we are free, we are free indeed!



My friends, we were unclean and not fit to come before our Maker. We were forced by Torah law to live "outside the camp" of the Holy One. By law, only the high priest can perform the ceremony that declared the person with this life-threatening disease to be clean. The Son of the Living God became that High Priest and sacrificed His own life so that all who had this dreadful

disease that forced them to live outside the camp could be made clean and brought near to the throne of grace.

May we give thanks for His precious blood and the power of His Holy Word! This is just another example of how Yeshua was telling the truth when he said that "Moses...wrote about Me" (John 5:46). ***He is the living Torah made flesh!***

Shalom,

Jim Staley