

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Laws relative to the leprosy. It is to be known by a rising in the flesh, a scab, or a bright spot, Leviticus 13:1, Leviticus 13:2. When the priest sees these signs he shall pronounce the man unclean, infected with the leprosy, and unfit for society, Leviticus 13:3. Dubious or equivocal signs of this disorder, and how the person is to be treated in whom they appear, Leviticus 13:4-8. In what state of this disorder the priest may pronounce a man clean or unclean, Leviticus 13:9-13. Of the raw flesh, the sign of the unclean leprosy, Leviticus 13:14, Leviticus 13:15. Of the white flesh, the sign of the leprosy called clean, Leviticus 13:16, Leviticus 13:17. Of the leprosy which succeeds a boil, Leviticus 13:18-20. Equivocal marks relative to this kind of leprosy, Leviticus 13:21, Leviticus 13:22. Of the burning boil, Leviticus 13:23. Of the leprosy arising out of the burning boil, Leviticus 13:24, Leviticus 13:25. Equivocal marks relative to this kind of leprosy, Leviticus 13:26-28. Of the plague on the head or in the beard, Leviticus 13:29. Of the scall, and how it is to be treated, Leviticus 13:30-37. Of the plague of the bright white spots, Leviticus 13:38, Leviticus 13:39. Of the bald head, Leviticus 13:40, Leviticus 13:41. Of the white reddish sore in the bald head, Leviticus 13:42-44. The leper shall rend his clothes, put a patch on his upper lip, and cry unclean, Leviticus 13:45. He shall be obliged to avoid society, and live by himself without the camp, Leviticus 13:46. Of the garments infected by the leprosy, and the signs of this infection, Leviticus 13:47-52. Equivocal marks relative to this infection, and how the garment is to be treated, by washing or by burning, Leviticus 13:53-58. Conclusion relative to the foregoing particulars, Leviticus 13:59.

Verse 2

The plague of leprosy - This dreadful disorder has its name leprosy, from the Greek ἰσθητικὴ λέπρα, from ἰσθητικὴ, a scale, because in this disease the body was often covered with thin white scales, so as to give it the appearance of snow. Hence it is said of the hand of Moses, Exodus 4:6, that it was leprous as snow; and of Miriam, Numbers 12:10, that she became leprous, as white as snow; and of Gehazi, 2 Kings 5:27, that, being judicially struck with the disease of Naaman, he went out from Elisha's presence a leper as white as snow. See Clarke's note on Exodus 4:6. In Hebrew this disease is termed tsaraath, from tsara, to smite or strike; but the root in Arabic signifies to cast down or prostrate, and in Ethiopian, to cause to cease, because, says Stockius, it prostrates the strength of man, and obliges him to cease from all work and labor. There were three signs by which the leprosy was known.

1.A bright spot.

2.A rising (enamelling) of the surface.

3.A scab; the enamelled place producing a variety of layers, or stratum super stratum, of these scales.

The account given by Mr. Maundrell of the appearance of several persons whom he saw infected with this disorder in Palestine, will serve to show, in the clearest light, its horrible nature and tendency. "When I was in the Holy Land," says he, in his letter to the Rev. Mr. Osborn, Fellow of Exeter College, "I saw several that labored under Gehazi's distemper; particularly at Sichem, (now Naplosu), there were no less than ten that came begging to us at one time. Their manner is to come with small buckets in their hands, to receive the alms of the charitable; their touch being still held infectious, or at least unclean. The distemper, as I saw it on them, was quite different from what I have seen it in England; for it not only defiles the whole surface of the body with a foul scurf, but also deforms the joints of the body, particularly those of the wrists and ankles, making them swell with a gouty scrofulous substance, very loathsome to look on. I thought their legs like those of old battered horses, such as are often seen in drays in England. The whole distemper, indeed, as it there appeared, was so noisome, that it might well pass for the utmost corruption of the human body on this side the grave. And certainly the inspired penman could not have found out a fitter emblem, whereby to express the uncleanness and odiousness of vice." - Maundrell's Travels. Letters at the end. The reader will do well to collate this account with that given from Dr. Mead; see the note on Exodus 4:6 (note).

Verse 3

The priest shall - pronounce him unclean - *vetimme otho*; literally, shall pollute him, i. e., in the Hebrew idiom, shall declare or pronounce him polluted; and in Leviticus 13:23, it is said, the priest shall pronounce him clean, *vetiharo haccohen*, the priest shall cleanse him, i. e., declare him clean. In this phrase we have the proper meaning of Matthew 16:19: Whatsoever ye bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. By which our Lord intimates that the disciples, from having the keys, i. e., the true knowledge of the doctrine, of the kingdom of heaven, should, from particular evidences, be at all times able to distinguish between the clean and the unclean, the sincere and

the hypocrite; and pronounce a judgment as infallible as the priest did in the case of the leprosy, from the tokens already specified. And as this binding and loosing, or pronouncing fit or unfit for fellowship with the members of Christ, must in the case of the disciples be always according to the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, the sentence should be considered as proceeding immediately from thence, and consequently as Divinely ratified. The priest polluted or cleansed, i. e., declared the man clean or unclean, according to signs well known and infallible. The disciples or ministers of Christ bind or loose, declare to be fit or unfit for Church fellowship, according to unequivocal evidences of innocence or guilt. In the former case, the priest declared the person fit or unfit for civil society; in the latter, the ministers of Christ declare the person against whom the suspicion of guilt is laid, fit or unfit for continued association with the Church of God. The office was the same in both, a declaration of the truth, not from any power that they possessed of cleansing or polluting, of binding or of loosing, but by the knowledge they gained from the infallible signs and evidences produced on the respective cases.

#### Verse 13

If the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean - Why is it that the partial leper was pronounced unclean, and the person totally covered with the disease clean? This was probably owing to a different species or stage of the disease; the partial disease was contagious, the total not contagious. That there are two different species or degrees of the same disease described here, is sufficiently evident. In one, the body was all covered with a white enamelled scurf; in the other, there was a quick raw flesh in the risings. On this account the one might be deemed unclean, i. e., contagious, the other not; for contact with the quick raw flesh would be more likely to communicate the disease than the touch of the hard dry scurf. The ichor proceeding from the former, when brought into contact with the flesh of another, would soon be taken into the constitution by means of the absorbent vessels; but where the whole surface was perfectly dry, the absorbent vessels of another person coming in contact with the diseased man could imbibe nothing, and therefore there was comparatively no danger of infection. Hence that species or stage of the disease that exhibited the quick raw rising was capable of conveying the infection for the reasons already assigned, when the other was not. Dr. Mead thus accounts for the circumstance mentioned in the text. See on Leviticus 13:18 (note). As the leprosy infected bodies, clothes, and even the walls of houses, is it not rational to suppose that it was occasioned by a species of animalcula or vermin burrowing under the skin? Of this opinion there are some learned supporters.

#### Verse 18

In the skin thereof, was a boil - Scheuchzer supposes this and the following verse to speak of phlegmonic, erysipelatous, gangrenous, and phagedenic ulcers, all of which were subjected to the examination of the priest, to see whether they were infectious, or whether the leprosy might not take its origin from them. A person with any sore or disposition to contagion was more likely to catch the infection by contact with the diseased person, than he was whose skin was whole and sound, and his habit good.

#### Verse 29

A plague upon the head or the beard - This refers to a disease in which, according to the Jews, the hair either on the head or the chin dropped out by the roots.

#### Verse 33

The scall shall he not shave - Lest the place should be irritated and inflamed, and assume in consequence other appearances besides those of a leprous infection; in which case the priest might not be able to form an accurate judgment.

#### Verse 45

His clothes shall be rent, etc. - The leprous person is required to be as one that mourned for the dead, or for some great and public calamity. He was to have his clothes rent in token of extreme sorrow; his head was to be made bare, the ordinary bonnet or turban being omitted; and he was to have a covering upon his upper lip, his jaws being tied up With a linen cloth, after the same manner in which the Jews bind up the dead, which custom is still observed among the Jews in Barbary on funeral occasions: a custom which, from Ezekiel 24:17, we learn had prevailed very anciently among the Jews in Palestine. He was also to cry, Unclean, unclean, in order to prevent any person from coming near him, lest the contagion might be thus communicated and diffused through society; and hence the Targumist render it, Be not ye made unclean! Be not ye made unclean! A caution to others not to come near him.

#### Verse 47

The garment also - The whole account here seems to intimate that the garment was fretted by this contagion; and hence it is likely that it was occasioned by a species of small animals, which we know to be the cause of the itch; these, by breeding in the garments, must necessarily multiply their kind, and fret the garments, i. e.,

corrode a, portion of the finer parts, after the manner of moths, for their nourishment. See Leviticus 13:52 (note).

#### Verse 52

He shall therefore burn that garment - There being scarcely any means of radically curing the infection. It is well known that the garments infected by the psora, or itch animal, have been known to communicate the disease even six or seven years after the first infection. This has been also experienced by the sorters of rags at some paper mills.

#### Verse 54

He shall shut it up seven days more - To give time for the spreading of the contagion, if it did exist there; that there might be the most unequivocal marks and proofs that the garment was or was not infected.

#### Verse 58

It shall be washed the second time - According to the Jews the first washing was to put away the plague, the second to cleanse it. Both among Jews and Gentiles the leprosy has been considered as a most expressive emblem of sin, the properties and circumstances of the one pointing out those of the other. The similitude or parallel has been usually run in the following manner: -

1. The leprosy began with a spot, a simple hidden infection being the cause.
2. This spot was very conspicuous, and argued the source whence it proceeded.
3. It was of a diffusive nature, soon spreading over the whole body.
4. It communicated its infectious nature, not only to the whole of the person's body, but also to his clothes and habitation.
5. It rendered the infected person loathsome, unfit for and dangerous to society because of its infectious nature.
6. The person infected was obliged to be separated from society, both religious and civil; to dwell by himself without the camp or city, and hold commerce with none.
7. He was obliged to proclaim his own uncleanness, publicly acknowledge his defilement, and, sensible of his plague, continue humbled and abased before God and man.

How expressive all these are of the nature of sin and the state of a sinner, a spiritual mind will at once perceive.

1. The original infection or corruption of nature is the grand hidden cause, source, and spring of all transgression.
2. Iniquity is a seed that has its growth, gradual increase, and perfection. As the various powers of the mind are developed, so it diffuses itself, infecting every passion and appetite through their whole extent and operation.
3. As it spreads in the mind, so it diffuses itself through the life; every action partaking of its influence, till the whole conduct becomes a tissue of transgression, because every imagination of the thoughts of a sinner's heart is only evil continually, Genesis 6. This is the natural state of man.
4. As a sinner is infected, so is he infectious; by his precept and example he spreads the infernal contagion wherever he goes; joining with the multitude to do evil, strengthening and being strengthened in the ways of sin and death, and becoming especially a snare and a curse to his own household.
5. That a sinner is abominable in the sight of God and of all good men, that he is unfit for the society of the righteous, and that he cannot, as such, be admitted into the kingdom of God, needs no proof.
6. It is owing to the universality of the evil that sinners are not expelled from society as the most dangerous of all monsters, and obliged to live without having any commerce with their fellow creatures. Ten lepers could associate together, because partaking of the same infection: and civil society is generally maintained, because composed of a leprous community.
7. He that wishes to be saved from his sins must humble himself before God and man, sensible of his own sore and the plague of his heart; confess his transgressions; look to God for a cure, from whom alone it can be received; and bring that Sacrifice by which alone the guilt can be taken away, and his soul be purified from all unrighteousness. See the conclusion of the following chapter at Leviticus 14:53 (note).