

14 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²This shall be the ritual for a leper at the time that he is to be purified.

When it has been reported to the priest, ³the priest shall go outside the camp. If the priest sees that the leper has been healed of his scaly affection, ⁴the priest shall order two live pure birds, cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop to be brought for him who is to be purified. ⁵The priest shall order one of the birds slaughtered

יד וידבר יהוה אל־משה לאמר: ואת תהיה תורת המצרע ביום טהרתו והובא אל־הכהן: ³ויצא הכהן אל־מחוץ למחנה וראה הכהן והנה נרפא נגע־הצרעת מן־הצרוע: ⁴וצוה הכהן ולקח למטהר שתי־צפרים חיות טהרות ועץ ארו ושני תולעת ואזב: ⁵וצוה הכהן ושחט את־הצפור האחת אל־בלי־חרש

THE PURIFICATION OF SKIN DISEASES (continued)

PURIFICATION RITES FOR INDIVIDUALS (14:1-32)

The rites ordained for the purification of a person who had suffered from *tzara-at* are among the most elaborate in the priestly laws. They demonstrate how seriously the *tzara-at* infections were regarded in ancient Israel.

2. ritual Hebrew: *torah*, which here means a manual of procedure for the priests, who administered the purification rites.

When it has been reported to the priest The priest went out to the afflicted person who

could not enter the camp, having been declared impure.

4. two live pure birds The birds must be physically sound and of a pure species.

crimson stuff Hebrew: *sh'ni tola-at*; literally, "the scarlet of the worm." A crimson dye is extracted from the eggs of an insect that lives in the leaves of oak trees. The cloth, most likely, was wool.

5. over fresh water in an earthen vessel Blood of the slaughtered bird not collected in the vessel would flow down into the earth. The Hebrew for "fresh water" (*mayim hayyim*) literally

CHAPTER 14

This *parashah* (read together with *Tazri-a* in most non-leap years) describes the ritual of purifying and reintegrating the recovered leper. We can read it as a description of the Israelites' attitude to the experience of recovering from illness. The text also discusses the appearance of a "plague" in the stones of a person's house and the implications of menstrual blood and seminal emissions as they relate to ritual impurity (*tum-ah*).

The formal description of the cleansing ritual masks the deep and possibly conflicted feelings of the person who has recovered from a serious illness. These might include feelings of relief and happiness together with a new appreciation of good health, perhaps resentment over what had been gone through as well as envy of people who had remained healthy. The offering of the recovered leper is sometimes referred to as "the sacrifice of one who has re-

turned from the dead," either because the illness was so grave or because a life cut off from all human contact, a life without friends and family, was not really a life.

3. the priest shall go outside the camp He is not to wait until people come to him with their concerns but must go to where the people are.

4. The offering included cedar wood, from the tallest and strongest of all plants, and hyssop, a kind of grass, the smallest and most vulnerable of all growing things. This was to symbolize the leveling power of illness, which afflicts the powerful and the powerless alike, and to teach the mighty a lesson about their vulnerability. The person recovered from illness may re-enter the camp but may not go home yet. Perhaps one who leaves the hospital or the isolation of serious illness with great relief is not yet fully oneself, not quite ready to resume the routines and responsibilities of normal life, home, and family.

over fresh water in an earthen vessel; ⁶and he shall take the live bird, along with the cedar wood, the crimson stuff, and the hyssop, and dip them together with the live bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. ⁷He shall then sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be purified of the eruption and purify him; and he shall set the live bird free in the open country. ⁸The one to be purified shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe in water; then he shall be pure. After that he may enter the camp, but he must remain outside his tent seven days. ⁹On the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair—of head, beard, and eyebrows. When he has shaved off all his hair, he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; then he shall be pure. ¹⁰On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish, three-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in for a grain offering, and one *log* of oil. ¹¹These shall be presented before the LORD, with the man to be purified, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, by the priest who performs the purification.

¹²The priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it with the *log* of oil as a reparation offering, and he shall elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD. ¹³The lamb shall be slaughtered at the spot in the sacred area

means "living water." It is water that flows continually, like that of springs.

9. of head, beard, and eyebrows It was normally forbidden to shave the beard or the side-locks of the head (19:27). Exceptions are made for these rites of purification.

10. log About 10 fluid ounces (0.3 L).

11. The person undergoing purification is stationed near the entrance of the Tent of Meet-

9. bathe his body in water This was not simply to cleanse oneself. It symbolized rebirth and re-creation—just as an infant is born out of water, just as a convert emerges out of water to a new life and a new identity, just as the

על-מים חיים: ⁶ אֶת-הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיָּה יִקַּח
אֹתָהּ וְאֶת-עֵץ הָאָרֶז וְאֶת-שְׁנֵי הַתּוֹלַעַת
וְאֶת-הָאֵזוֹב וְטָבַל אוֹתָם וְאֶת הַצִּפּוֹר
הַחַיָּה בְּדָם הַצִּפּוֹר הַשְּׁחֻטָּה עַל הַמַּיִם
הַחַיִּים: ⁷ וְהִזָּה עַל הַמְטָהָר מִן-הַצִּרְעַת
שִׁבְעַ פְּעָמִים וְטָהָרוּ וְשָׁלַח אֶת-הַצִּפּוֹר
הַחַיָּה עַל-פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה: ⁸ וְכִבֶּס הַמְטָהָר
אֶת-בְּגָדָיו וְגִלַּח אֶת-כָּל-שְׁעָרוֹ וְרִחַץ
בַּמַּיִם וְטָהָר וְאַחֵר יָבֹא אֶל-הַמַּחֲנֶה
וַיֵּשֶׁב מִחוּץ לָאֹהֶל שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: ⁹ וְהָיָה
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי יִגְלַח אֶת-כָּל-שְׁעָרוֹ אֶת-
רֹאשׁוֹ וְאֶת-זָקְנוֹ וְאֶת גְּבַת עֵינָיו וְאֶת-
כָּל-שְׁעָרוֹ יִגְלַח וְכִבֶּס אֶת-בְּגָדָיו וְרִחַץ
אֶת-בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְטָהָר: ¹⁰ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי
יִקַּח שְׁנַיִם-כִּבְשִׂיִם תְּמִימִים וְכִבְשָׂה אַחַת
בַּת-שָׁנָתָה תְּמִימָה וְשִׁלְשָׁה עֶשְׂרֹנִים
סֹלֶת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן וְלֹג אֶחָד שֶׁמֶן:
¹¹ וְהָעֹמֵד הַכֹּהֵן הַמְטָהָר אֶת הָאִישׁ
הַמְטָהָר וְאֹתָם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה פֶּתַח אֹהֶל
מוֹעֵד:

¹² וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַכֶּבֶשׂ הָאֶחָד וְהִקְרִיב
אֹתוֹ לְאֲשֶׁם וְאֶת-לֹג הַשֶּׁמֶן וְהִנִּיף אֹתָם
תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ¹³ וְשַׁחַט אֶת-הַכֶּבֶשׂ
בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִשַׁח אֶת-הַחֻטָּאת וְאֶת-

ing, together with the material assembled for use in the purification.

12. reparation offering This provided sacrificial blood to be sprinkled on the extremities of the individual who was being purified; blood from the burnt offering or from the purification offering could not be applied to the human body.

13. at the spot in the sacred area That is, on the north side of the altar (see 1:11, 4:24, and 7:2).

world was created out of water (Gen. 1:2). The experience of illness and recovery has made the leper a new person—that is, someone who now looks at life differently (*Seifer Ha-Hinnukh*).

where the purification offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered. For the reparation offering, like the purification offering, goes to the priest; it is most holy. ¹⁴The priest shall take some of the blood of the reparation offering, and the priest shall put it on the ridge of the right ear of him who is being purified, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. ¹⁵The priest shall then take some of the *log* of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. ¹⁶And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in the palm of his left hand and sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. ¹⁷Some of the oil left in his palm shall be put by the priest on the ridge of the right ear of the one being purified, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot—over the blood of the reparation offering. ¹⁸The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one being purified. Thus the priest shall make expiation for him before the LORD. ¹⁹The priest shall then offer the purification offering and make expiation for the one being purified of his impurity. Last, the burnt offering shall be slaughtered, ²⁰and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar, and the priest shall make expiation for him. Then he shall be pure.

²¹If, however, he is poor and his means are insufficient, he shall take one male lamb for a reparation offering, to be elevated in expiation

14. on the ridge of the right ear The person was treated literally from head to foot.

18. The rites were essential to securing expiation, or purification. The purification offering and the burnt offering were also parts of the purification rites. The purification offering served to place the individual in good standing with God.

17. The oil is placed on the leper's head, hand, and foot and sprinkled on the altar, to convey the idea that recovery from illness is

העלה במקום הקדש כי כחטאת האשם הוא לכהן קדש קדשים הוא: ¹⁴ ולקח הכהן מדם האשם ונתן הכהן על-תנוף און המטהר הימנית ועל-בהן ידו הימנית ועל-בהן רגלו הימנית: ¹⁵ ולקח הכהן מלג השמן ויצק על-כף הכהן השמאלית: ¹⁶ וטבל הכהן את-אצבעו הימנית מן-השמן אשר על-כפו השמאלית והזה מן-השמן באצבעו שבע פעמים לפני יהוה: ¹⁷ ומיתר השמן אשר על-כפו יתן הכהן על-תנוף און המטהר הימנית ועל-בהן ידו הימנית ועל-בהן רגלו הימנית על דם האשם: ¹⁸ והנותר בשמן אשר על-כף הכהן יתן על-ראש המטהר וכפר עליו הכהן לפני יהוה: ¹⁹ ועשה הכהן את-החטאת וכפר על-המטהר מטמאתו ואחר ישחט את-העלה: ²⁰ והעלה הכהן את-העלה ואת-המנחה המזבחה וכפר עליו הכהן וטהר: ²¹ ואם-דל הוא ואין ידו משגת ולקח כבש אחד אשם לתנופה לכפר עליו

שלישי [חמישי]

The burnt offering symbolized renewed acceptability as a worshiper and full reinstatement in the community.

21-32. These verses repeat the rites prescribed in verses 1-20, except that birds are substituted for animals in the burnt offering and in the purification offering.

the combined result of our actions, our attitudes, and divine grace.

for him, one-tenth of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in for a grain offering, and a *log* of oil; ²²and two turtledoves or two pigeons, depending on his means, the one to be the purification offering and the other the burnt offering. ²³On the eighth day of his purification he shall bring them to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, before the LORD. ²⁴The priest shall take the lamb of reparation offering and the *log* of oil, and elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD. ²⁵When the lamb of reparation offering has been slaughtered, the priest shall take some of the blood of the reparation offering and put it on the ridge of the right ear of the one being purified, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. ²⁶The priest shall then pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand, ²⁷and with the finger of his right hand the priest shall sprinkle some of the oil that is in the palm of his left hand seven times before the LORD. ²⁸Some of the oil in his palm shall be put by the priest on the ridge of the right ear of the one being purified, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, over the same places as the blood of the reparation offering; ²⁹and what is left of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one being purified, to make expiation for him before the LORD. ³⁰He shall then offer one of the turtledoves or pigeons, depending on his means—³¹whichever he can afford—the one as a purification offering and the other as a burnt offering, together with the grain offering. Thus the priest shall make expiation before the LORD for the one being purified. ³²Such is the ritual for him who has a scaly affection and whose means for his purification are limited.

³³The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

TZARA-AT IN BUILDING STONES

(vv. 33–53)

This section deals with some sort of mold, blight,

ועשרון סלת אחד בלול בשמן למנחה ולג שמן: ²² ושתי תרים או שני בני יונה אשר תשיג ידו והיה אחד חטאת והאחד עלה: ²³ והביא אתם ביום השמיני לטהרתו אל-הכהן אל-פתח אהל-מועד לפני יהוה: ²⁴ ולקח הכהן את-כבש האשם ואת-לג השמן והניף אתם הכהן תנופה לפני יהוה: ²⁵ ושחט את-כבש האשם ולקח הכהן מדם האשם ונתן על-תנוף אזן-המטהר הימנית ועל-בהן ידו הימנית ועל-בהן רגלו הימנית: ²⁶ ומן-השמן יצק הכהן על-כף הכהן השמאלית: ²⁷ והזה הכהן באצבעו הימנית מן-השמן אשר על-כפו השמאלית שבע פעמים לפני יהוה: ²⁸ ונתן הכהן מן-השמן אשר על-כפו על-תנוף אזן המטהר הימנית ועל-בהן ידו הימנית ועל-בהן רגלו הימנית על-מקום דם האשם: ²⁹ והנותר מן-השמן אשר על-כף הכהן יתן על-ראש המטהר לכפר עליו לפני יהוה: ³⁰ ועשה את-האחד מן-התרים או מן-בני היונה מאשר תשיג ידו: ³¹ את אשר-תשיג ידו את-האחד חטאת ואת-האחד עלה על-המנחה וכפר הכהן על המטהר לפני יהוה: ³² זאת תורת אשר-בו נגע צרעת אשר לא-תשיג ידו בטהרתו: פ

³³ וידבר יהוה אל-משה ואל-אהרן לאמר:

or rot, perhaps of a fungoid nature, that produced recessed lesions and discoloration in the plaster or mud used to cover building stones.

34When you enter the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession, and I inflict an eruptive plague upon a house in the land you possess, 35the owner of the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, "Something like a plague has appeared upon my house." 36The priest shall order the house cleared before the priest enters to examine the plague, so that nothing in the house may become impure; after that the priest shall enter to examine the house. 37If, when he examines the plague, the plague in the walls of the house is found to consist of greenish or reddish streaks that appear to go deep into the wall, 38the priest shall come out of the house to the entrance of the house, and close up the house for seven days. 39On the seventh day the priest shall return. If he sees that the plague has spread on the walls of the house, 40the priest shall order the stones with the plague in them to be pulled out and cast outside the city into an impure place. 41The house shall be scraped inside all around, and the coating that is scraped off shall

34 כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְכֶם לְאֶחְזָה וְנִתְחַלֵּי נֹגַע צֹרְעַת בְּבַיִת אֶרֶץ אֲחֻזַּתְכֶם: 35 וּבֹא אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ הַבַּיִת וְהִגִּיד לַכֹּהֵן לֵאמֹר כִּנְגַע נֹרְאָה לִי בְּבַיִת: 36 וְצֹוֹה הַכֹּהֵן וּפָנּוּ אֶת-הַבַּיִת בְּטָרִם יָבֵא הַכֹּהֵן לְרִאִוֹת אֶת-הַנֹּגַע וְלֹא יִטְמָא כָּל-אֲשֶׁר בְּבַיִת וְאַחַר כֵּן יָבֵא הַכֹּהֵן לְרִאִוֹת אֶת-הַבַּיִת: 37 וְרָאָה אֶת-הַנֹּגַע וְהִנֵּה הַנֹּגַע בְּקִירַת הַבַּיִת שְׂקַעְרֹוֹת יִרְקַרְקַת אוֹ אֲדַמְדָּמֹת וּמֵרְאִיָּהוּ שְׁפָל מִן-הַקִּיר: 38 וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן מִן-הַבַּיִת אֶל-פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת וְהִסְגִּיר אֶת-הַבַּיִת שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: 39 וְשָׁב הַכֹּהֵן בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי וְרָאָה וְהִנֵּה פָשָׁה הַנֹּגַע בְּקִירַת הַבַּיִת: 40 וְצֹוֹה הַכֹּהֵן וְחָלְצוּ אֶת-הָאֲבָנִים אֲשֶׁר בָּהֶן הַנֹּגַע וְהִשְׁלִיכוּ אֹתָהֶן אֶל-מְחוּץ לְעִיר אֶל-מְקוֹם טָמֵא: 41 וְאֶת-הַבַּיִת יִקְצַע מִבַּיִת סָבִיב וְשִׁפְכוּ אֶת-הָעֶפֶר אֲשֶׁר הִקְצוּ אֶל-מְחוּץ לְעִיר

36. Once the priest arrives and quarantines the house, everything inside it becomes impure as well.

37. *streaks that appear to go deep into the wall* Literally, "lesions that appear to be recessed within the surface of the wall."

38. *close up the house* A diseased person is closed up in a house. Here, the house itself is locked up to keep people out.

39. If the lesions became enlarged, it is likely that the blight, or fungus, has penetrated the stones themselves.

41. The mud coating is scraped off the interior facing of the rest of the stones to ascertain whether the infection had penetrated the stones themselves.

34. The appearance of *tzara-at* in the stones of a house was a mysterious event. Some Sages doubted it ever happened, and others consigned it to a distant past. Commentators consider the afflicted house (*ha-bayit ha-m'nugga*) to be a moral warning rather than a natural occurrence, even more emphatically than they consider cases of skin disease to be a moral warning. They fasten on the word for "I inflict" to deduce that this was a plague sent by God. A home is a family's private refuge. Thus a home afflicted by plague represents the breakdown of the social values that kept a family safe and united. It was a cause for concern if the problems of society at large had come to infect the home. Most commentators suggest

that the antisocial behavior that brought the plague to the house was selfishness, a blindness to the needs of others.

35. *owner of the house* Literally, "one whose house it is," leading the Sages to conclude that the owner sinned by saying, "the house and everything in it are mine and I don't have to share it with anyone else" (BT Yoma 11b). As punishment, the house is torn down. The Midrash pictures such owners claiming that they cannot help the poor because they are poor themselves. When their houses are dismantled, all will see what they were hoarding (Lev. R. 17:2).

40. *stones . . . to be pulled out* From the heart of the selfish owner.

be dumped outside the city in an impure place. 42They shall take other stones and replace those stones with them, and take other coating and plaster the house.

43If the plague again breaks out in the house, after the stones have been pulled out and after the house has been scraped and replastered, 44the priest shall come to examine: if the plague has spread in the house, it is a malignant eruption in the house; it is impure. 45The house shall be torn down—its stones and timber and all the coating on the house—and taken to an impure place outside the city.

46Whoever enters the house while it is closed up shall be impure until evening. 47Whoever sleeps in the house must wash his clothes, and whoever eats in the house must wash his clothes.

48If, however, the priest comes and sees that the plague has not spread in the house after the house was replastered, the priest shall pronounce the house pure, for the plague has healed. 49To purify the house, he shall take two birds, cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop. 50He shall slaughter the one bird over fresh water in an earthen vessel. 51He shall take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the crimson stuff, and the live bird, and dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle on

pure. 14On the eighth day he shall take two tur-

dedoves or two pigeons and come before the

load at the

42. *take other coating and plaster the house* The stones could be retained if the blight had not penetrated into them.
46-47. These verses deal with the transmission of an impurity that is present in a closed structure to people who are inside the structure while it is impure.

43-45. Is the problem superficial, easily cleared up, or has it entered the structure of the institution, so that the institution is beyond saving?

The house shall be torn down The Midrash sees this as an anticipation of the destruc-

אל־מקום טָמֵא: 42 וְלָקְחוּ אֲבָנִים אַחֲרוֹת וְהִבִּיאוּ אֶל־תַּחַת הָאֲבָנִים וְעָפְרוּ אַחַר יָקַח וְטַח אֶת־הַבַּיִת:

43 וְאִם־יָשׁוּב הַנִּגַּע וּפָרַח בַּבַּיִת אַחַר חֲלָץ אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים וְאַחֲרֵי הַקְּצוֹת אֶת־הַבַּיִת וְאַחֲרֵי הַטּוּחַ: 44 וּבֹא הַכֹּהֵן וְרָאָה וְהִנֵּה פָּשָׁה הַנִּגַּע בַּבַּיִת צָרַעַת מִמְּאֲרַת הוּא בַּבַּיִת טָמֵא הוּא: 45 וְנָתַץ אֶת־הַבַּיִת אֶת־אֲבָנָיו וְאֶת־עֵצָיו וְאֶת כָּל־עֹפֵר הַבַּיִת וְהוֹצִיא אֶל־מַחוּץ לְעִיר אֶל־מְקוֹם טָמֵא:

46 וְהָבֵא אֶל־הַבַּיִת כָּל־יְמֵי הַסְּגִיר אֹתוֹ יְטַמֵּא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: 47 וְהִשְׁכַּב בַּבַּיִת יִכְבֹּס אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְהָאָכַל בַּבַּיִת יִכְבֹּס אֶת־בְּגָדָיו:

48 וְאִם־בָּא יָבֵא הַכֹּהֵן וְרָאָה וְהִנֵּה לֹא־פָּשָׁה הַנִּגַּע בַּבַּיִת אַחֲרֵי הַטּוּחַ אֶת־הַבַּיִת וְטָהַר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַבַּיִת כִּי נִרְפָּא הַנִּגַּע:

49 וְלָקַח לְחֹטֵא אֶת־הַבַּיִת שְׁתֵּי צִפְרִים וְעֵץ אֲרֹז וּשְׁנֵי תוֹלַעַת וְאֹזֶב: 50 וְשָׁחַט אֶת־הַצִּפֹּר הָאֶחָת אֶל־כְּלֵי־חֶרֶשׁ עַל־מִים חַיִּים: 51 וְלָקַח אֶת־עֵץ־הָאֲרֹז וְאֶת־הָאֹזֶב וְאֶת שְׁנֵי הַתּוֹלַעַת וְאֶת הַצִּפֹּר הַחַיָּה וְטָבַל אֹתָם בְּדַם הַצִּפֹּר הַשְּׁחוּטָה וּבַמִּים הַחַיִּים וְהִזָּה אֶל־הַבַּיִת שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים:

49. The procedures for purifying the house that has "healed," so to speak, are almost identical to those prescribed in verses 1-32 for purifying a diseased person. There is only one difference: Oil and blood are sprinkled on a person; water and blood are sprinkled on a house.

tion of Solomon's temple, a house that will have been corrupted by the behavior of its inhabitants (Lev. R. 17:7). It then adds, "But it will not be forever, as it is stated, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation'" (Isa. 28:16).

the house seven times. ⁵²Having purified the house with the blood of the bird, the fresh water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the crimson stuff, ⁵³he shall set the live bird free outside the city in the open country. Thus he shall make expiation for the house, and it shall be pure.

⁵⁴Such is the ritual for every eruptive affection—for scalls, ⁵⁵for an eruption on a cloth or a house, ⁵⁶for swellings, for rashes, or for discolorations—⁵⁷to determine when they are impure and when they are pure.

Such is the ritual concerning eruptions.

15 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ²Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:

When any man has a discharge issuing from his member, he is impure. ³The impurity from his discharge shall mean the following—whether his member runs with the discharge or is stopped up so that there is no discharge, his impurity means this: ⁴Any bedding on which the one with the discharge lies shall be impure, and every object on which he sits shall be im-

^{54-57.} These verses are a postscript to the entire contents of chapters 13 and 14.

52 וְחָטָא אֶת-הַבַּיִת בְּדַם הַצִּפּוֹר וּבַמֵּיִם הַחַיִּים וּבַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיָּה וּבַעֵץ הָאֲרָז וּבְאֵזוֹב וּבִשְׁנֵי הַתּוֹלְעוֹת: 53 וְשָׁלַח אֶת-הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיָּה אֶל-מְחוּץ לְעִיר אֶל-פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה וּכְפָר עַל-הַבַּיִת וְטָהַר:

חמישי 54 זֹאת הַתּוֹרָה לְכָל-נֶגַע הַצִּרְעָת וּלְנֹתֶק: 55 וּלְצִרְעַת הַבְּגָד וּלְבַיִת: 56 וּלְשֹׂאֵת וּלְסַפְּחַת וּלְבִהָרַת: 57 לְהוֹרֹת בְּיוֹם הַטָּמֵא וּבְיוֹם הַטָּהוֹר זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַצִּרְעָת: ס

טו וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: 2 דַּבְּרוּ אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֲלֵהֶם

אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי יִהְיֶה זָב מִבְּשָׁרוֹ זוּבוֹ טָמֵא הוּא: 3 וְזֹאת תִּהְיֶה טְמֵאתוֹ בְּזוּבוֹ רַר בְּשָׁרוֹ אֶת-זוּבוֹ אוֹ-הַחֲתִים בְּשָׁרוֹ מְזוּבוֹ טְמֵאתוֹ הוּא: 4 כָּל-הַמְּשָׁכָב אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב עִלָּיו הֲזָב יִטְמָא וְכָל-הַכְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-יֵשֵׁב

DISCHARGES FROM SEXUAL ORGANS (15:1-33)

Most of this chapter deals with discharges from the sexual organs as a result of illness or infection, not the normal menstruation of females or seminal emissions of males. Little was known about their treatment, apart from bathing, laundering clothing, and carefully observing the course taken by the ailment itself. All the impurities dealt with in this chapter, like any prevailing impurity

within the Israelite community, threatened, directly or indirectly, the purity of the sanctuary, which was located within the area of settlement.

THE ISRAELITE MALE (vv. 1-18)

2. member Hebrew: *basar* (body, flesh); here it is a euphemism for the male sex organ.

4. lies . . . sits Two sorts of objects are ren-

CHAPTER 15

^{2ff.} Once again we encounter the notion of *tum-ah* not as uncleanness or contamination but as an encounter with the mysterious

life-engendering power of certain bodily fluids and with the life-endangering dimension of disease. This encounter with the primal forces of life and death rule out (or may possibly replace) other ways of entering into the divine presence.

pure. ⁵Anyone who touches his bedding shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ⁶Whoever sits on an object on which the one with the discharge has sat shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ⁷Whoever touches the body of the one with the discharge shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ⁸If one with a discharge spits on one who is pure, the latter shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ⁹Any means for riding that one with a discharge has mounted shall be impure; ¹⁰whoever touches anything that was under him shall be impure until evening; and whoever carries such things shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ¹¹If one with a discharge, without having rinsed his hands in water, touches another person, that person shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ¹²An earthen vessel that one with a discharge touches shall be broken; and any wooden implement shall be rinsed with water.

¹³When one with a discharge becomes purified of his discharge, he shall count off seven days for his purification, wash his clothes, and bathe his body in fresh water; then he shall be pure. ¹⁴On the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and come before the LORD at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and

dered impure by contact with a person who has a discharge: those on which one lies, and those on which one sits. These objects must be purified.

5. bathe in water One must bathe completely.

7. Direct contact with the affected person renders one impure.

8-9. Verses 8-9 deal with contact initiated by the affected person.

spits Spittle was thought to carry infection and disease.

means for riding Hebrew: *merkav*, denoting "an object on which one rides," such as a saddle or other appurtenance located under the rider. If

עָלָיו יִטְמָא: ⁵ וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִגַע בְּמִשְׁכְּבוֹ יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטִמָּא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ⁶ וְהִישֵׁב עַל-הַכְּלִי אֲשֶׁר-יֹשֵׁב עָלָיו הֲזָב יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטִמָּא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ⁷ וְהִנְגַע בְּבָשָׂר הֲזָב יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטִמָּא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ⁸ וְכִי-יִרַק הֲזָב בְּטְהוֹר וְכִבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטִמָּא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ⁹ וְכָל-הַמְרֻכָּב אֲשֶׁר יִרְכַּב עָלָיו הֲזָב יִטְמָא: ¹⁰ וְכָל-הַנֶּגַע בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה תַּחְתָּיו יִטְמָא עַד-הָעֶרֶב וְהַנוֹשֵׂא אוֹתָם יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטִמָּא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ¹¹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִגַע-בּוֹ הֲזָב וִידָיו לֹא-שָׁטַף בַּמַּיִם וְכִבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם וְטִמָּא עַד-הָעֶרֶב: ¹² וְכָל-יְחִירֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִגַע-בּוֹ הֲזָב יִשְׁבֵּר וְכָל-כְּלִי-עֵץ יִשְׁטַף בַּמַּיִם: ¹³ וְכִי-יִטְהַר הֲזָב מִזּוּבוֹ וְסָפַר לוֹ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לְטְהָרָתוֹ וְכִבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחֵץ בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם חַיִּים וְטָהַר: ¹⁴ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִקַּח-לוֹ שְׁתֵּי תֹרִים אוֹ שְׁנֵי בְנֵי יוֹנָה וּבָא לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֶל-פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד

7. v. חצי הספר בפסוקים

cause the person in question offended God by any act on his or her part, but because the impurity (i.e. the ailment) threatened the purity of the sanctuary.

13. Both the man and the woman are ritually impure after the sex act, and both must

someone with a discharge rides on these objects, they become impure. **10. whoever touches anything that was under him** That is, under the affected person. In this case, the impurity extends only to the body of the person who touches such objects, not to the clothing.

whoever carries such things Contact by carrying objects entails the usual severe restrictions in response.

13. seven days for his purification Seven consecutive days must pass after the termination of the ailment before ritual purification can be undertaken.

give them to the priest. ¹⁵The priest shall offer them, the one as a purification offering and the other as a burnt offering. Thus the priest shall make expiation on his behalf, for his discharge, before the LORD.

¹⁶When a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and remain impure until evening. ¹⁷All cloth or leather on which semen falls shall be washed in water and remain impure until evening. ¹⁸And if a man has carnal relations with a woman, they shall bathe in water and remain impure until evening.

¹⁹When a woman has a discharge, her discharge being blood from her body, she shall remain in her menstrual impurity seven days; whoever touches her shall be impure until evening. ²⁰Anything that she lies on during her menstrual impurity shall be impure; and anything that she sits on shall be impure. ²¹Anyone who touches her bedding shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening; ²²and anyone who touches any object on which she has sat shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening. ²³Be it the bedding or be it the object on which she

וּנְתַנֶּם אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: ¹⁵ וְעִשָּׂה אֹתָם הַכֹּהֵן
אֶחָד חֲטָאת וְהָאֶחָד עֹלָה וְכִפָּר עָלָיו
הַכֹּהֵן לְפָנָי יְהוָה מִזֹּבָבוֹ: ס
וְאִישׁ כִּי־תִצָּא מִמֶּנּוּ שִׁכְבַּת־זָרַע וְרָחַץ
בְּמַיִם אֶת־כָּל־בְּשָׂרוֹ וְטָמֵא עַד־הָעֶרֶב:
¹⁷ וְכָל־בְּגָד וְכָל־עוֹר אֲשֶׁר־יְהִי עָלָיו
שִׁכְבַּת־זָרַע וְכִבֵּס בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא עַד־
הָעֶרֶב: פ ¹⁸ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אִישׁ
אִתָּה שִׁכְבַּת־זָרַע וְרָחֲצוּ בְּמַיִם וְטָמְאוּ
עַד־הָעֶרֶב:
¹⁹ וְאִשָּׁה כִּי־תִהְיֶה זֹבָה דָּם יְהִי זֹבָה
בְּבִשְׂרָהּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תִּהְיֶה בְּנִדְתָּהּ
וְכָל־הַנִּגָּע בָּהּ יִטְמָא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ²⁰ וְכָל־
אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁכַּב עָלָיו בְּנִדְתָּהּ יִטְמָא וְכָל־
אֲשֶׁר־תִּשֵּׁב עָלָיו יִטְמָא: ²¹ וְכָל־הַנִּגָּע
בְּמִשְׁכַּבָּהּ יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא
עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ²² וְכָל־הַנִּגָּע בְּכָל־כְּלִי אֲשֶׁר־
תִּשָּׁב עָלָיו יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא
עַד־הָעֶרֶב: ²³ וְאִם עַל־הַמִּשְׁכָּב הוּא אֹ
עַל־הַכְּלִי אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יִשְׁבַת־עָלָיו בְּנִגְעוֹ-

ששי
[שביעין]

15. A purification offering is required not because the person in question offended God by any act on his or her part, but because the impurity (i.e., the ailment) threatened the purity of the sanctuary.

18. Both the man and the woman are ritually impure after the sex act, and both must bathe.

19. The enforced separation of husband and wife during her menstrual period parallels the dietary laws. Both sets of regulations inculcate holiness by introducing rules of what is permitted and what is forbidden into what

THE ISRAELITE FEMALE (vv. 19-30)

The subjects of the law in this section are a woman's normal menstruation and her abnormal discharges of blood.

19. *menstrual impurity* Better: "menstrual condition." Hebrew: *niddah*, denoting the physiologic process of the flow of blood.

are matters of instinct for all other living creatures. Once again, the Torah defines the uniqueness of the human being as the ability to control instinct instead of being controlled by it.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

15:19. *discharge being blood* This and the following verses are the basis for *taharat ha-mishpahah*, the "family purity" laws that prohibit sexual contact during a woman's menstrual period until after her subsequent immersion in a *mikveh* (ritual bath). The biblical requirement for a man to immerse after a seminal emission (Lev. 15:16-17) fell into disuse by talmudic times (BT Ber. 21b-22a).

15:20. *shall be impure* Jewish law places no restrictions on a menstruant's touching a Torah scroll or reciting or leading prayers.

has sat, on touching it he shall be impure until evening. ²⁴And if a man lies with her, her menstrual impurity is communicated to him; he shall be impure seven days, and any bedding on which he lies shall become impure.

²⁵When a woman has had a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or when she has a discharge beyond her period of menstrual impurity, she shall be impure, as though at the time of her menstrual impurity, as long as her discharge lasts. ²⁶Any bedding on which she lies while her discharge lasts shall be for her like bedding during her menstrual impurity; and any object on which she sits shall become impure, as it does during her menstrual impurity. ²⁷Whoever touches them shall be impure; he shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain impure until evening.

²⁸When she becomes purified of her discharge, she shall count off seven days, and after that she shall be pure. ²⁹On the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, and bring them to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. ³⁰The priest shall offer the one as a purification offering and the other as a burnt offering; and the priest shall make expiation on her behalf, for her impure discharge, before the LORD.

³¹You shall put the Israelites on guard against their impurity, lest they die through their im-

24. he shall be impure seven days He must bathe and launder his clothing after seven days.

25. A woman who has discharges of blood not caused by menstruation bears the same impurity as a menstruating woman for as long as the discharges last.

28. Like the male in verse 13, the female must count off seven days after the termination of her abnormal discharge of blood.

29-30. This is the essential difference between abnormal and normal conditions: Abnormalities ultimately require ritual expiation as part of the purification process, whereas normal con-

בו יטמא עדה־הערב: ²⁴ ואם שכב וישכב איש אתה ותהי נדתה עליו וטמא שבעת ימים וכל־המשכב אשר־ישכב עליו יטמא: ²⁵ ואשה כִּי־יוֹבֵב זֹב דָּמָה יָמִים רַבִּים בְּלֹא עֵת־נִדְתָּה אוֹ כִּי־תֹזֵב עַל־נִדְתָּה כִּלְיָמֵי זֹב טָמְאָתָה כִּי־יָמֵי נִדְתָּה תִּהְיֶה טָמְאָה הוּא: ²⁶ כָּל־הַמְשָׁכֵב אֲשֶׁר־תִּשְׁכַּב עָלָיו כִּלְיָמֵי זֹבָה כַּמְשָׁכֵב נִדְתָּה יִהְיֶה לָּהּ וְכָל־הַפְּלִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשָּׁב עָלָיו טָמֵא יִהְיֶה כַּטָּמְאָת נִדְתָּה: ²⁷ וְכָל־הַנוֹגֵעַ בָּם יִטְמָא וְכַבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרַחַץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד־הָעֶרֶב:

²⁸ וְאִם־טָהְרָה מִזֹּבָה וְסִפְרָה לָּהּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וְאַחַר תִּטְהַר: ²⁹ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי תִקַּח־לָּהּ שְׁתֵּי תֹרִים אוֹ שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי יוֹנָה וְהִבְיָאָה אוֹתָם אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ³⁰ וַעֲשֵׂה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הָאֶחָד חֲטָאת וְאֶת־הָאֶחָד עֹלָה וְכִפֹּר עָלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן לִפְנֵי יְהוָה מִזֹּב טָמְאָתָה: ³¹ וְהוֹרַתֶם אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִטָּמְאָתָם

Two features of popular piety may be singled out. First, people would seek out holy men for consultation on topics of health or wealth. On such occasions, they would provide gifts in payment and gratitude. Second, the story of an Arabian commander seeking out an Israelite wonder worker shows that in matters of health and healing political or religious boundaries were of little account. Such conditions, though they induce impurity, require only bathing and laundering of clothing and observance of the proper period of waiting. Such normal conditions do not of themselves involve the sanctuary directly, unless a person in such a state actually enters the sacred precincts.

CONCLUSION (vv. 31-33)

31. lest they die through their impurity It is not the condition of impurity itself that brings on God's punishment, but the failure to correct that condition so as to restore a state of purity.

purity by defiling My Tabernacle which is among them.

³²Such is the ritual concerning him who has a discharge: concerning him who has an emission of semen and becomes impure thereby, ³³and concerning her who is in menstrual infirmity, and concerning anyone, male or female, who has a discharge, and concerning a man who lies with an impure woman.

וְלֹא יִמְתְּנוּ בְּטִמְאַתְכֶם בְּטִמְאַם אֶת־מִשְׁכְּנִי אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹכְכֶם:

³² זֹאת תֹּרַת הַזָּב וְאֲשֶׁר תֵּצֵא מִמֶּנּוּ שִׁכְבַת־זָרַע לְטִמְאָה־כָּה; ³³ וְהַדָּוָה בְּנִדְתָּהּ וְהַזָּב אֶת־זִוְכּוֹ לְזָכָר וּלְנִקְבָּה וּלְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב עִם־טִמְאָה: פ

31. My Tabernacle which is among them

Even when Israelites are impure, God's presence is found among them. Abravanel understands "My Tabernacle" as referring to the hu-

man body. Thus "defiling My Tabernacle" refers to rendering our bodies impure. Because each person is created in God's image, his or her body is a temple of God.

... אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב עִם־טִמְאָה: פ
... וְהַדָּוָה בְּנִדְתָּהּ וְהַזָּב אֶת־זִוְכּוֹ לְזָכָר וּלְנִקְבָּה
... זֹאת תֹּרַת הַזָּב וְאֲשֶׁר תֵּצֵא מִמֶּנּוּ שִׁכְבַת־זָרַע לְטִמְאָה־כָּה;
... אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹכְכֶם: פ

... אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב עִם־טִמְאָה: פ
... וְהַדָּוָה בְּנִדְתָּהּ וְהַזָּב אֶת־זִוְכּוֹ לְזָכָר וּלְנִקְבָּה
... זֹאת תֹּרַת הַזָּב וְאֲשֶׁר תֵּצֵא מִמֶּנּוּ שִׁכְבַת־זָרַע לְטִמְאָה־כָּה;
... אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹכְכֶם: פ

dition, though they induce impurity, require only bathing and laundering of clothing and absence of the proper period of waiting. Such normal conditions do not in themselves involve the sanctuary directly, unless a person in such a state actually enters the sacred precinct.

24. He shall be as pure as water. He must bathe and launder his clothing after seven days.
25. A woman who has a discharge of blood, if not caused by menstruation, bears the same impurity as a menstruating woman for as long as the discharge lasts.

CONCLUSION (vv. 31-33)

31. For they are through their impurity. It is not the condition of impurity itself that brings on God's punishment, but the failure to correct that condition so as to avert the

26. Like the male in verse 13, the female must count off seven days after the termination of her abnormal discharge of blood.
27-30. This is the general difference between abnormal and normal conditions. Abnormal conditions usually require ritual expiation as part of the purification process, whereas normal con-

הַפְּטָרָה תַּזְרִי-א

HAFTARAH FOR TAZRI-A

2 KINGS 4:42-5:19

(When Tazri-a and M'tzora are combined, recite the haftarah for M'tzora.)

This *haftarah* comprises two episodes from a cycle of wonder-working tales about the activities of the northern prophet Elisha during the reign of King Jehoram (851-842 B.C.E.). They report the miraculous feeding of a multitude with only a small amount of bread (2 Kings 4:42-44) and the healing of an Aramean leper named Naaman (5:1-19). Earlier in chapter 4, before the start of the *haftarah*, these two episodes are preceded by accounts of the miracle of a jug of oil (4:1-7), the resurrection of a Shunammite boy (4:8-37), and making poisonous food in a pot edible (4:38-41). Passages after the *haftarah* present the miracle of a floating ax head (6:1-7) and the wondrous end to a famine caused by the Aramean siege of Samaria (7:1-20). The preservation of such an extensive collection of wonders proves the popularity of such tales among the people. Significantly, almost the entire anthology figures in *haftarah* readings: 2 Kings 4:1-37 is the selection for *Va-yera*, 4:42-5:19 is the portion for *Tazri-a*, and 7:3-20 is the text for *M'tzora*.

In the sparse narrative about the loaves of bread (4:42-44), the connecting thread is provided by the verb "to give" (*natan*). A man brings his votary gift to Elisha, who instructs his steward Gehazi to "give" (*ten*) it to the people. When the steward doubts how he could "give" (*etten*) this small amount of loaves to so many, the prophet reissues his command to "give" (*ten*) the food to the people. When the steward complied and "gave" (*va-yitten*) the food to the masses, there was more than enough to go around. The miracle is underscored as something promised and fulfilled by God. The text also indicates Elisha's magnanimity, dispensing to the people gifts he refused to take for himself.

The account of Naaman's miraculous cure is presented with greater detail and fuller dialogues. Indeed, the dialogues generate the stages of narrative action: The Israelite girl intervenes with her mistress, the Aramean commander begs leave of his king, the king of Israel misinterprets the letter of the king of Aram, and Elisha expresses readiness to perform the desired cure that Naaman might know the power of prophets in Israel. Finally, Elisha sends a message to Naaman with instructions for a cure, and Naaman presents Elisha with a theological statement recognizing the unique power of the God of Israel whom he now wants to worship exclusively.

When the Aramean commander expresses his gratitude for being cured by offering Elisha a gift (5:15), the man of God once again demonstrates his refusal to profit from his prophetic powers (v. 16). This leads to a poignant reversal, as Naaman then requests the gift of some loads of holy earth to build a shrine to God in Aram (v. 17).

Two features of popular piety may be singled out. First, people would seek out holy men for consultation on topics of health or wealth. On such occasions, they would provide gifts in payment and gratitude. Second, the story of an Aramean commander seeking out an Israelite wonder worker shows that in matters of health and healing, political and religious boundaries were of little concern. People wanted the best and most respected divine aid and would go to a recognized shrine or healer as necessary.

Elisha's cure is simple and straightforward. Naaman is told to dip seven times in holy water. Naaman apparently had expected something more elaborate and ceremonious. The seven ab-lutions, however, were the key. They recall the prophet Balaam's request for seven altars, seven rams, and seven bulls before delivering his oracles (Num. 23:1-6,29). They also remind us of the