

# METZORAH { מִצְרַע } (Infected One)

Leviticus 14:1-15:33, 2 Kings 7:3-20, Matthew 23:16-24:2, 30-31

## A Messianic Jewish Commentary

By Hannah Neshet [www.voiceforisrael.net](http://www.voiceforisrael.net)

### The Torah of the Leper

**“The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “This shall be the torah (instructions) for the leprous person { תּוֹרַת הַמִּצְרַע } for the day of his cleansing.” (Leviticus 14:1-2)**

This parashah (Torah study) deals with the law of the ‘leper’. Atonement needed to be made for cleansing of the leper. As part of the cleansing ceremony, the priest (Cohen) would put some of the blood of the sacrificial offering upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot (Leviticus 8:23).

This represents atonement and cleansing of everything we hear, everything we do, and all the paths we take. Even a house could be infected with ‘leprosy’ and sometimes needed to be totally destroyed.

This may have been caused by some form of fungus like dry rot.



Dry rot fungus



Mildew infecting a flat

In northern Israel, we noticed that many homes had a problem with mold and mildew because of the damp, cold winters and lack of central heating. One home that we lived in had such a problem with the mold that we could not get rid of it and had to move out. It was causing my youngest son to have terrible ear infections that no medicine would cure.

Sometimes we are in environments that are so toxic, that nothing we can do will cleanse the situation enough for it to be conducive to human life, health and growth. There is no remedy powerful enough to eradicate the ‘leprosy’ of this particular ‘house’ in which we live. It must be utterly destroyed. We must move from this environment or situation and start over, despite the heavy cost and losses involved in the destruction of the home.

King Solomon, in all his wisdom, wrote in the book of Ecclesiastes, **“There is a time to build up but also a time to tear down.”** (Ecclesiastes 3:3). When a malignant leprosy has so invaded a home, just like a malignant cancer, it must be cut out and removed. Even the stones and timber would be removed from the house and carried off to a designated ‘unclean place’.

**“Behold, if the plague be spread in the house, it is a malignant leprosy in the house; it is unclean. And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place.”** (Leviticus 14:44-45)

Sometimes a situation in our lives or relationship has become so defiled and unhealthy that it must be leveled to the ground; we must start over in a new place, trusting that God will help us to begin anew.

### Buying a Lemon

Recently, I experienced this with buying a ‘*lemon*’ in Israel. No, not the yellow fruit that goes on trees, but a real lemon of a car! For some reason, I thought I could get away with buying a car for only 10,000 shekels (around \$3,500). I thought I would be saving some money, but really I was just being cheap and it ended up costing us so much more than if I had bought a car for more money in the first place.



Photo: Hannah with her first car in Israel

Within one week it needed a new transmission; within the first month, it needed the motor replaced – and that was just the beginning. (You can read the entire sad tale on my blog: <https://hannahnesher.wordpress.com/2011/03/>)

Finally it became apparent that all I was doing was throwing more and more shekels down into a bottomless pit that lined some mechanic’s pockets. I realized that I was going to have to ‘cut my losses’ and just get rid of the car. When I took the car in to trade at a dealer, probably just for parts, (I couldn’t sell this piece of junk to another person) it broke down on the highway, costing us another 3000 shekels off the trade-in price.

I had to finally let the whole thing go and chalk it up to experience. It occurred to me, however, that it may be necessary to do the same in some of our life situations. We certainly need discernment from the Holy Spirit to know when to keep holding on in faith and when to accept the reality of the ‘malignant leprosy’ that needs to be cleansed completely from our life.

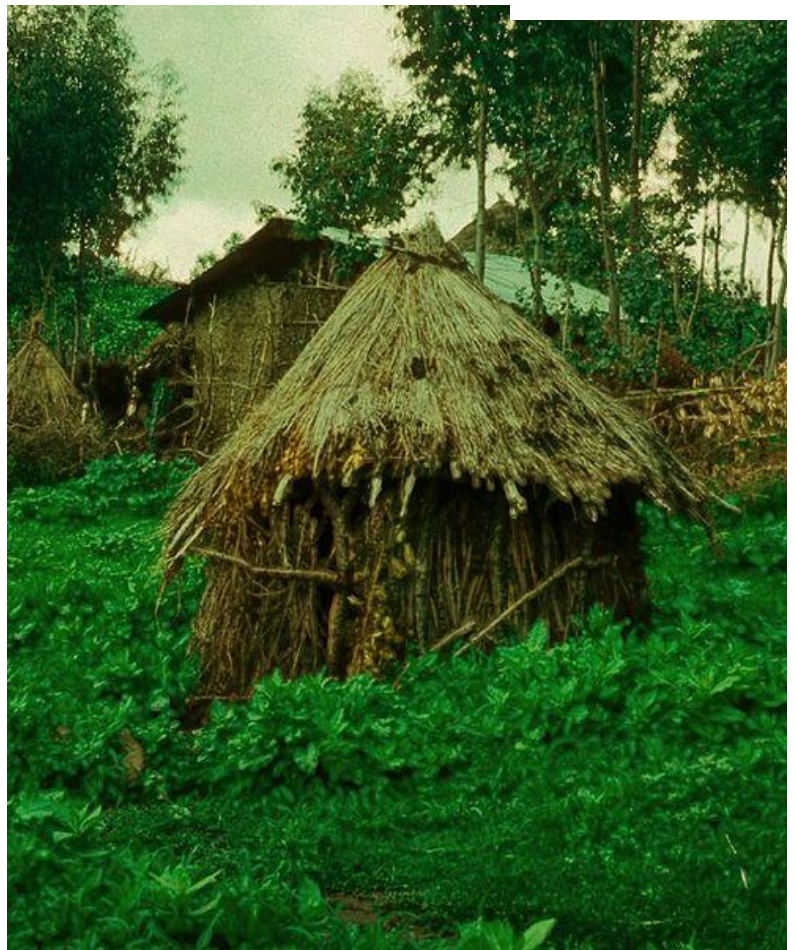
## Laws of Niddah (Marital Purity)

The next portion of the parashah deals with cleansing from bodily secretions and the **laws of niddah** (regarding a woman's menstrual cycle and sexual relations).

This law calls upon a woman to be separated from the community for a period of seven days during her menstrual cycle. Sexual relations are forbidden at this time between a husband and his wife.

In some parts of the world, for example in Ethiopia, they still practice these laws of niddah . I am told that they have menstrual huts for the women where they may go to rest and relax for this one week out of each month while they are menstruating.

For most women, I suspect, this sounds like a heavenly idea! *"Where can I go to the nearest menstrual hut, right?"* Might be a lot of women faking their period! 😊



A niddah hut (Mergem Gogo) at the Jewish village of Ambober in northern Ethiopia, 1976.

But seriously, this makes total sense and in my opinion, we disregard this law to our detriment. Apparently, when the Ethiopian Jews made aliyah, they had real difficulties adjusting to the new, less communal lifestyle without their menstrual huts.

I have known modern day Messianic women who try to keep the laws of niddah strictly and during their period, carry around a pillow with them wherever they go so that they do not defile anyone else who may sit after them on the sofa, chair, etc. Besides announcing to the world that you are having your period, this seems just a bit silly to me. But this is only my opinion.

In Israel and amongst Orthodox Jews, men will not sit next to a woman on a bus or shake her hand or risk any kind of physical contact with a woman in case she may be having her period at the time and therefore render him 'unclean'.

I have had men forward me questions about dancing in their Messianic congregations; they have decided to use a handkerchief between them instead of holding hands for this reason. Certainly we want to keep God's commandments in the Torah; because of the lifestyle many of us live today, we must continually seek the Holy Spirit for specific applications in how to walk the 'ancient paths'.



I will insert here an article I wrote several years ago on the issue of niddah and marriage.

## Laws of Family and Marital Purity – Niddah

God wants to help us in every aspect of our lives, but we must be willing to allow Him to teach us how to conduct even our most intimate relationships. He promises that if we walk in His ways, we will experience blessing, but if we walk contrary to the ways He has made known to us, we will miss this blessing and even experience various misfortunes. The creator of the universe has already written the instruction manual for a successful, happy, healthy, human life. This manual is the Torah (the Bible).

Torah is wrongly translated as ‘law’, which gives it a negative connotation to most people. Instead, its meaning is closer to ‘instruction’. We ignore these instructions only at our peril. One area of our lives that we desperately need God’s help with is in the area of family and marriage. With today’s high divorce rate, and the unhappiness rampant in so many marriages that do remain structurally intact, many people are clutching at straws to find ways to save their disintegrating family relationships.



Jewish wedding ceremony. Photo Go Israel

Many problems are created in families and especially in marriage due to our faulty understandings of the concepts of submission, and our lack of knowledge of Torah in the area of sexuality. Hopefully, this Torah study on marriage and the laws of family purity (niddah) will be helpful in restoring Godly homes and families.

**“God said it was not good for man to be alone, and so he created the woman as a helper (ezer k’negdo) for the man.”** (Genesis 2:18)

The word ezer, in Hebrew, definitely means helper. The Holy Spirit is called our helper as well. The second word used, however, comes from the word ‘neged’ which means ‘against’. It seems to me that when we think of a woman as a helpmeet to a man we usually visualize the soft, submissive, ‘yes dear’ kind of wife. But using the word ‘k’negdo’ means that a wife, in order to truly be a suitable helper to her husband, must sometimes stand against or in opposition to him.

I am thinking now of Abigail, the woman of brains and beauty who saved everyone by going against her husband's foolishness, to ask forgiveness of King David and to appeal to his sense of mercy. Abigail not only saved her entire household and staff, she ended up becoming David's wife as well after God struck Naval (fool in Hebrew) a death blow.

As much as we desire to be the good, submissive wives that Paul and others exhort us to be, we cannot meekly follow our husbands into sin and carnality, such as Saphira did with Ananais – a compromise that led to both their deaths. An 'ezer k'negdo' seems, in its original design, to be quite a different form than today's Christian template of a Godly, submissive wife.

Interestingly, in Israel a man may open a business and employ his wife as his 'ezer esek' (business helper), but a woman may not register a business with her husband as her ezer esek! (We found this out through personal experience.) The woman is to be the helper to the man, not vice versa.

Wedding Dress from International Christian Embassy Bridal ministry



In general terms, God has created men to lead and women to help their men; but the Torah does give us several examples of Godly women leaders such as the prophetess Deborah. God created mankind in His own image, male and female He created them.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore we know that God (Elohim) contains both the male and female aspects of humankind. He is not the female 'goddess' of the New Age religions; neither is He the domineering, macho, male that some try to portray Him as. Rather, He contains elements of both the maternal and paternal.

## Becoming Echad

In marriage, a man is to leave his mother and father and cleave unto His wife and the two are to become one flesh.<sup>2</sup> Sitting at the bus stop one day in Jerusalem, an old Baba<sup>3</sup> asked me if my daughter, Liat, (who was a baby at the time) was a boy or a girl? When I answered that she is a girl, she smiled and said, "*That's good. Boys are with us only until they get married, but girls are attached for life!*"

The Hebrew word for cleave is actually **davak**, which means **to stick or to glue (devek)**. A man is to *be glued* on to his wife. Ideally, this glue is to be like superglue for the first year. A man is not to go to war or any kind of army service for a whole year after the wedding in order to become bonded to his wife.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:27

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 2:24

<sup>3</sup> grandmother

**“If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.”** (Deuteronomy 24:5)

I’m sure there are men out there thinking how nice it would be to take a whole year off just to make their new bride happy! ☺

The word ‘one’ in the Hebrew scripture here is ‘echad’ **אֶחָד** . It is the same word used in the Hebrew scriptures in the well-known verse, ‘**Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is one (echad).**’ (Deuteronomy. 6:4)

Marriage was meant to be a lifetime, covenantal relationship. AWhen a man and woman consummate their marriage on their wedding night, the woman is intended ideally to be a virgin. Her hymen would be broken with the first act of intercourse and the blood released sealing the covenant between the two parties.

In some Orthodox Jewish communities, the ‘wedding sheet’ needs to be presented with its drops of blood as proof that the marriage covenant has been sealed. For all the covenants are sealed with blood.<sup>4</sup>

Abraham walked through the pieces of animals, Moses sprinkled the blood on the people, and Yeshua offered his own blood for the sealing of the New Covenant for the remission of sins.

And so if this institution is divinely ordained, and if it is meant to be an unbroken relationship, what goes wrong? The sad reality is that many marriages are failures. The majority of marriages fail to achieve their purposes: to unite two people in love; to bestow upon them a feeling of belonging, acceptance, security, serenity; to act as a defense for one another; to form a productive, fruitful partnership; to give warmth and companionship,; and to raise Godly children together who will love and serve the Lord.



My parents under the chuppah on their wedding day.  
Celebrating 60 years of faithful marriage August 2015

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<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 10:18-22

Many people enter into marriage with the romantic illusion that ‘love conquers all’, and instead find tension, misery, and frustration. What is the answer? Besides the obvious of making a wise choice of one’s partner in the first place, I believe that God’s instructions about marriage and sexuality hold an important key to a successful, healthy, happy marriage that glorifies God.

The Christian concept that celibacy is recommended and marriage only a concession to man’s weakness (better to marry than to burn) has created a negative attitude towards sex, perhaps born out of the permissiveness and sex-glorification of the ancient pagan world. Sex, however, within divinely created boundaries, is not sinful, but rather sacred.

The commandment to propagate the race was the first mitzvah given to mankind. Within the limits of Torah, the sexual bond is not only tolerated, but encouraged. Sexual communion is considered a legal right of the wife, no less than the food and clothing her husband is required to provide for her according to the terms of the ketubah (marriage contract).



Signing of the ketubah

Our sexuality, however, must be tempered with restraint, lest like the fire that warms a home and cooks the food, it rages out of control and destroys the dwelling and all within it. This ability to practice restraint in the face of temptation is an expression of holiness. In preparation for the people to approach God at Mt. Sinai, the men were prohibited from having sexual relations with their wives for three days prior to their divine encounter.

God has set us apart to be a holy people unto Him. The Torah forbids a husband to approach his wife during the time of her menses. The prohibition of physical contact lasts seven days. According to halachah (Rabbinical rules of Judaism), the seven days are to begin only once the woman’s flow has ceased. After this time, according to Orthodox Judaism, the woman must immerse herself in a body of water known as a mikvah and recite a special blessing in which she praises God, thanking Him for her husband and praying for her marriage and family.

The immersion (tevillah) is a way of effecting ritual purification. It was adopted by Christianity from Judaism, as a rite of initiation (baptism). Yeshua told his closet, night seeker, Nicodemus, “**Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God .**” (John 3:5)

Some denominations have adapted the custom of the mikvah as sprinkling with water rather than full immersion. Mikvah is used today, not only for Family Purity but also for the conversion of Gentiles into Judaism, as well as the practice by some pious Jews to immerse before some special Holy Days.



## The Mikvah (Ritual Water Immersion)

The Mikvah { **Hebrew:** מקווה / מקִּוּהָ } in Israel is a private affair, usually maintained in an inconspicuous building, with the woman immersing herself without clothing, with only her attendant present to witness to her full immersion.

Sometimes the mikvah provides cosmetics, creams and lotions for the woman to beautify herself before returning home to resume relations with her husband. In my opinion, this is a beautiful tradition, but I want to make clear that although this practice does not contradict scripture, it is also not commanded in the Torah.



Pool of a medieval mikveh in [Speyer](#), dating back to 1128 .

Let's look at what the Torah actually has to say:

**“If a woman has a discharge, and the discharge from her body is blood, she shall be set apart seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening...and if any man lies with her at all, so that her impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days,... But if she is cleansed of her discharge, then she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean....Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness...”** (Leviticus 15:19-31)

There are a couple of other places where the Torah forbids sexual relations between husband and wife during the time of her menstrual flow.

**“Also you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness as long as she is in her customary impurity. Do not defile yourselves with any of these things...”** (Leviticus 18:19)

What are some of the other things that God tells us cause defilement? They include adultery, offering your children as a sacrifice to molech (a pagan deity), homosexuality (a male lying with a male as if a woman), and bestiality (sex with animals). All these sins are grouped together as abominations and practices that defile people. It was for these pagan practices that the land of Israel ‘vomited out its former inhabitants’. God strictly forbade His people from following in their pagan ways and practices.

**“If a man lies with a woman during her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed her flow, and she has uncovered the flow of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from their people.”** (Leviticus 20: 18)

Again, in this chapter, along with the prohibition against sexual intercourse during a woman's menstrual period, God also forbids the mating with animals, child sacrifice, consulting with mediums and psychics, adultery, homosexuality, and cursing of one's father or mother.



Isn't it ironic, that so many people of God campaign against homosexuality, pornography, and stand in defense of the family, and yet remain completely ignorant of the prohibition against sexual relations at this certain time of the month? The same people who condemn homosexuals as sinners may be committing an equally abominable act in God's sight!

So how does one go about practicing the laws of family purity? Besides the letter of the law, the spirit of the law is even more important. If we do all things, but we have not love, we are completely and totally nothing.<sup>5</sup>

And so it is of vital importance that during the time that husband and wife are physically separated, they must demonstrate the utmost of love, respect, and affection towards one another. This is especially important to meet the emotional needs of the woman, who desires to feel loved, accepted and cherished, not only when she meets the sexual needs of her husband, but also when she does not.

That is, she comes to know, through this period of love without physical intimacy, that she is cherished just for who she is; that her husband is not just using her for his own, selfish desires. This is truly a husband demonstrating the unselfish, sacrificial love of the Messiah for His bride.

What other benefits have this cycle of abstinence and fulfillment? It provides a much needed recovery period for both husband and wife, to establish a necessary regulation of the sexual appetite of the male as well as a replenishing of the woman's desire.



A *chuppah* at the [Sixth & I Synagogue](#) in [Washington D.C.](#)

Because this voluntary period of separation is mutually accepted, neither spouse may approach the other; neither need fear the necessity of declining the other's advances and thereby have their affection or abilities suspect. This cycle is crucial to protect the marriage bond from one of its worst enemies: the tendency for sex to become routinized.

What may begin as an exciting adventure due to the sexual attraction between newlyweds may disintegrate over time into a dull, mechanical act. What is meant to be a delightful, sacred communion between husband and wife, a holy act which could possibly result in the amazing creation of another human being, could become something profane and ordinary. This is a deadly poison to a happy marriage.

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians chapter 13

Unrestricted approachability leads to over-indulgence. This over-familiarity, with its resulting boredom, can cause much resentment and tension in marriage. When, however, the couple observes the ‘niddah’ period, this abstinence helps keep the attraction and longing between husband and wife fresh and new. It is like a mini-honeymoon each month.

Many men fail to fully realize how very important this ‘love-without-sexual-contact’ is to a woman. It is exactly this non-sexual affection – all the many hours spent together in emotional and spiritual intimacy during the engagement period – that so firmly bonds a woman to a man before marriage. Often, once the mad rush of life begins, this necessary expression of tenderness without physical contact is forgotten. It should, then, be no mystery why a wife may seem to become non-responsive – her needs for non-sexual attention and affection prior to physical intimacy are no longer being met.



Orthodox Jewish wedding with *chuppah* in [Vienna](#)'s first district, close to [Judengasse](#), 2007.

Perhaps it may seem as if this practice focuses exclusively on the needs of the woman and neglects the physical needs of the man. But this is not so – practicing the laws of family purity have great benefits for the husband as well. Not only do they raise his level of self-control and establish him in holiness, but in creating a harmonious atmosphere for one’s marriage and family life, he will also benefit from the peace, love, and tranquility in his home.

When a woman’s emotional needs are subjugated under a man’s unrestrained sexuality, she often feels used, defiled, and unloved. Some husbands have not understood the intensity of resentment this can create. I have had several wives express these sentiments. One said they felt like telling their husbands to ‘leave the money on the table’ after the act of intercourse. Another said she felt that “she could have a paper bag over her head and it wouldn’t make a difference to her husband.”

In other words, women need to feel that they are loved and cherished as unique, vital, autonomous, independent beings possessed of dignity and inner value, rather than as objects or instruments to be manipulated for the satisfaction of another’s selfish purposes.

There is a tendency, in a sexual relationship, to begin to regard the partner as a ‘thing’, to fulfill one’s own passions and desires. Such an attitude destroys the dignity of both individuals and will necessarily carry over into all other aspects of life. This command in the Torah, by restraining

the husband from pursuing his own sexual goals in an uncontrolled fashion, reminds him that his wife was not created solely for his pleasure.

Ideally, the husband must be mutually committed to accept this mitzvah (commandment) and refrain from approaching his wife in any manner whatsoever. Through these laws of family purity, he learns in marriage that the woman God has given him is a gift endowed with divine dignity, a person and not a thing – a thou and not an it.

The following is a Bride's prayer, which may be recited after each period of abstinence before resuming marital relations. It may also be used at the mikvah before a wedding.

### **A BRIDE'S PRAYER<sup>6</sup>**

May it be Thy will that Thy presence dwell between my husband and me, and that Thou unify Thy Holy Name through us. Introduce into our hearts the spirit of sanctity, and remove from us all evil thoughts and plans.

Give to my husband and to me purity of soul, that neither of us fix our gaze upon any other person in the world, but that I should regard only him, and he, only me. May he be in my eyes as if there were no other man in the world as good, as handsome, and as charming; and may I be in the eyes of my husband as if there were no other woman in the world as beautiful, as charming, and as fitting for him.



*A Jewish wedding (Jozef Israëls, 1903)*

May his thoughts always be about me and about no one else, as it is written, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife.”<sup>7</sup>

And may it be Thy will, O Lord God, that our marriage prosper; that it be a marriage that will accord with the laws of God in the Torah; a marriage endowed with reverence for God and the fear of sin; a marriage in which will be realized the verse, “Your wife shall be like a fruitful wine in the interior of your house, your children like olive plants around your table”;<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lamm, Norman , A hedge of roses, Jewish insights into marriage and married life, Phillipp Feldheim, Inc. New York , 1966

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 2:24

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 128:3





*Taking the bride to the [bath house](#), [Shalom Koboshvili](#), 1939*

a marriage wherein my husband will rejoice in me more than in all the delights of the world, as it is written, “A house and wealth is the inheritance of fathers, but only from the Lord is a wise wife”;<sup>9</sup>

a marriage in which there will never come between my husband and me any anger or bitterness, any jealousy or envy, but in which there will be between us only love and fraternity and peace and comradeship, humility and meekness and patience;

a marriage in which there will be practiced love and charity and kindness, and the doing of good deeds to all creatures; a marriage which will yield children who will endure, who will be decent, righteous, wholesome, and honorable, who will be healthy and good, in whom there will be no flaw, no defect, no illness, no disease, no injury, no pain, no weakness, no failure, and who will not lack good all the days of their life;

a marriage wherein Thou wilt bestow upon our souls and our bodies holiness and purity in thought, speech, and action as befits people of God; a marriage of prosperity and blessing, blessings of Heaven above, blessings of health and fertility.

Now therefore, in order to unite Thy Holy Name in fear and in love, I prepare for this immersion. May it be Thy will, O Lord God, that Thou purify us and sanctify us with Thy holiness; that Thou find us and our deeds acceptable, and give us the privilege of doing Thy will at all times, all the days of our life; and bless us with Thy blessings, for Thou art the source of all blessings forever.

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<sup>9</sup> Proverbs 19:14



## Haftorah Metzorah - WHY SIT WE HERE?

The portion that I also find very interesting in this week's study is in the haftorah. It is the account of four lepers who take a great risk and end up with an even greater reward.

At this time, also during the life of Elisha the prophet, the Syrians had placed a terrible siege against Samaria. All food in the city had been consumed, so that all the inhabitants of the city faced certain death and lived in the last stages of total despair.

So terrible was the situation that some women were planning to use the flesh of their own children for food! The King blames Elisha the prophet for the calamity and vows to put him to death.



A 24-year-old man from Norway, infected with leprosy, 1886.

However, Elisha made a shocking announcement: that by the end of the very next day, God would send relief and the famine would be ended.

**“And Elisha said: 'Hear ye the word of the LORD; thus saith the LORD: To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.'” (2 Kings 7:1)**

The lepers confer amongst themselves and come to the conclusion that, since they are going to die anyways, they might as well do something crazy – go out to the enemy camp. They might kill them, but then again, they just might live and save their lives. They say, *“What are we sitting here for until our death?”* (literal translation from Hebrew).

**“Why sit we here until we die?...Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Arameans; if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.” (2 Kings 7:3-20)**

Some of us are in this very situation; perhaps not physically, but spiritually, mentally, and emotionally, we are dying. The life is being starved out of our very being minute by minute, hour by hour and day after dreary day. We are sitting passively in the midst of a situation that is sucking the very life out of us.

For some, it is a job we despise, for others a place we are not suited for, or perhaps even a relationship that is not of God. And yet we sit...and sit...and sit...hoping and praying and hoping and praying that somehow, somewhere, sometime, someone will save us. But nothing changes; it only gets worse.

I am all for long-suffering and blooming where we are planted and all these things – in the proper context – but perhaps there comes a time when we must seriously ask ourselves one question, “*Why sit we here until we die?*” Yes indeed, why?

Of course we all know the answer – F.E.A.R. (false evidence appearing real). I once talked to a woman who has reams and reams of stories and words written, much of which is beautiful and would be a blessing to others but she is afraid to publish any of it. Why? Fear.

Another woman I know lives with three children and her husband crammed into a tiny, one bedroom basement apartment while her house is being renovated. Guess how long this has been going on? Ten years! A decade! Why doesn't she take steps to create a better, larger life for herself and her children? Fear. Even when someone offered her a four bedroom home to live in, she was absolutely paralyzed. She is neither poor nor destitute; in fact she has an inheritance but fear keeps her bound.

Another woman I know of has been living with her husband for fifteen years. He is a drug abuser and alcoholic, a thief, a con man and an adulterer; he is also physically abusive. She phones me and cries, “*Why do I stay with him?*” It is not for lack of resources – there are many places in the city where she could go for help. She would not be destitute; nor alone, nor on the street. The church is a block away; they even offer support groups for separated or divorced people. Her child is nearly grown. What stops her from finding freedom and a life of dignity? Fear.

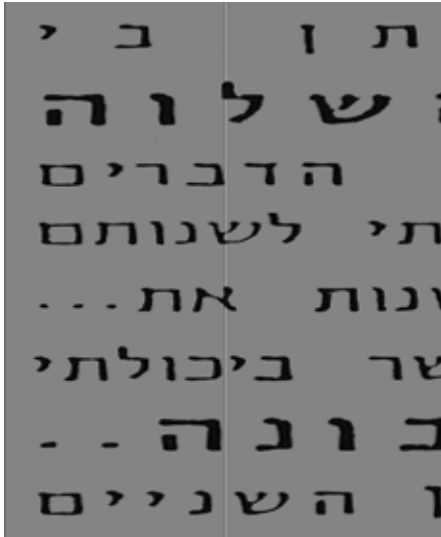
I have my own situations in which I feel stuck, paralyzed, living so far below what I feel God has called me to. What keeps us stuck in the miry clay instead of soaring on wings like an eagle? Fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of success, fear of responsibility, fear of abandonment, the list could go on and on.

The truth, however, is that “**God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind.**” (2 Timothy 1:7) The only fear we are to have is the fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. (Proverbs 9:10)

There is another enemy of our soul that can rob us of life and that is passivity. Just not wanting to take action; not wanting to take the initiative to get out of a bad situation or move towards a better life. What if we're wrong? Sometimes life seems like a 'Choose Your Own Adventure' book. If you make one choice, you turn to page 11 but if you make a different choice, you turn to page 49. Each choice leads to an entirely different outcome.

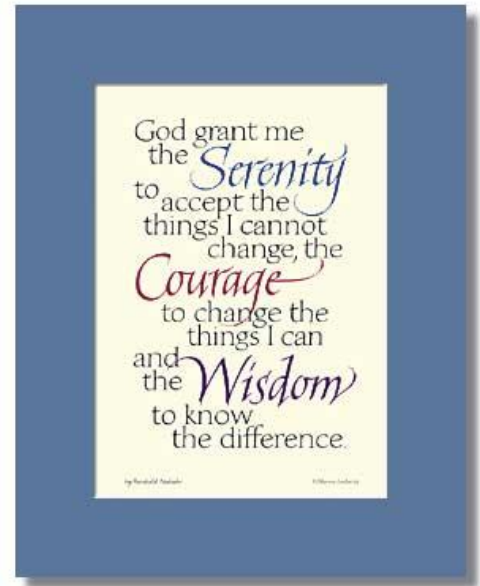
What if we make the wrong decision? What if we make a move and it turns out to be a disaster? The lepers asked themselves the same question. What if we move out and we die? Well, we're going to die here anyways, so we might as well risk it.

Sometimes we wonder why our life is so desperately miserable. Perhaps it has to get painful enough for us to be willing to make a change. Some people are passive; they don't like where they're at but they won't do anything about it. They just want to sit and complain. We all know people like that and we grow weary of listening to their whining.



One of my aunts, Auntie Phyllis, used to say, “*If you don't like the channel on the radio, then get up and change it!*”

Of course there are some things we can change and others we cannot. The ‘serenity prayer’ reminds us that wisdom is to know the difference.



Surely there is a time to sit and wait upon the Lord; but then there comes a time to get up, take courage in hand, and say,

*“I'm not going to just sit here any longer, just taking up oxygen on this planet until I die. Life must consist of more than just existing and paying our bills. I'm going to go out there and take a risk. I might not make it; I might fail, but at least I will have tried.”*

Yeshua said he came to give us life and life more abundantly<sup>10</sup>. But some of us are missing out on this abundant life because we are afraid to move out and try something new.

I find it interesting that when the lepers moved out of camp and approached the camp of the Arameans, they found no one there. Why? **“The Lord had made the host of the Arameans to hear a noise of chariots and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host;”** (2 Kings 7:6)

God had already prepared a way! *When he saw those lepers moving out, moving towards hope, towards a better future, He met them with His supernatural power.* He caused the Arameans to hear noises that made them think a great army was coming against them and so they fled for their lives, leaving everything behind. All the lepers had to do was come in and take it. They went from one tent to another, feasting and drinking and carrying off silver and gold and other wonderful things.

Just think of the blessing the lepers would have missed had they remained in fear or passivity. Isn't that enough to just motivate us to take action – to take a chance; to get out of the boat and

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<sup>10</sup> John 10:10

try walking on water? What blessings does God have in store for us, just waiting for us to come and take them all if only we had the courage to step out into the unknown?

SUDDENLY! – PITOM!

Then the lepers begin to experience pangs of conscience - they felt guilty for keeping the sustenance and treasure all to themselves when their people are dying of starvation. So they went to tell the King.

At first, the King thought this must be some kind of trick, so he sent out messengers to see for himself. When the messengers returned with a good report, the people went out and spoiled the camp of the Arameans thereby fulfilling Elisha's prophecy.

There may be a situation in our lives that has been very bad for a very long time. We can lose hope that things will ever change. There doesn't seem to be any signs of improvement. But God doesn't always work on the gradual scale. Suddenly!! (Pit'om in Hebrew) the famine was over.

Sometimes we have to wait for a 'suddenly', for a pit'om – when God just breaks loose on a situation and brings relief. It may be a wayward child, a family member that doesn't want to hear or receive the gospel message, a backsliding spouse, or a 'deep-seated and lingering disorder' that doesn't respond to healing therapies and prayer; but one day, our suddenly could come - at any time. Therefore we don't lose heart....

The guard at the gate who scoffed at Elisha's prophecy was trampled by the mad rush of people going out to grab the spoil of the Arameans. This will be the punishment of those who live in unbelief. We must always hope in God's mercy; for it is new every morning. Great is His faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Notice that God used four lepers to bring salvation to Israel. As Messianic Believers we are also like lepers – outcasts, rejected, the 'black sheep of the family', considered 'unclean', having often to live 'outside the camp' of the community of Israel because of our faith in Yeshua as the Messiah. We are willing to go outside the camp, just as our master did, to bear His reproach for His sake. But we are the only ones who can bring the good news of salvation to our people.

People are suspicious; they think we are trying to trick them, to convert them to another religion, to draw them away from our holy heritage and our faith that comes from our forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Nothing could be further from the truth. We want only to share with our people the wonderful riches and sustenance that we have found in Yeshua – even eternal life.

We found this treasure by, each in our own way, being willing to step out into the unknown and risk spiritual death in order to find the truth. We cannot keep such incredible riches to ourselves. We know that Yeshua is the way the truth and the life. Without Him, His body and His blood, our people will die like our ancestors who ate the manna in the wilderness. We must eat of the living bread (lechem chayim) and we will live forever. What wonderful news to come from a bunch of leprous people – made clean only through the blood of Yeshua.



May we not just take the spoils and keep it to ourselves, but share the good news with others. While He walked on the earth, Yeshua healed lepers. May we be one of the lepers who returns to give thanks to Him for all He has done for us.

May we each have the courage to overcome the fear, laziness and passivity that stops us from stepping out to take hold of all the blessings God has for us, just waiting outside our comfort zone. May we have the courage to step away from the familiar and the stifling, to walk away from a life of mere existence and embrace the great adventure of life with God.

We must possess the determination and courage to do what is necessary to nourish and sustain our own body and soul. And ultimately, others will be nourished as well.

Lepers are disempowered people – doomed to live a miserable life of isolation until they die. But the lepers in this haftarah teach us that we can overcome cultural and societal limitations and labels in order to make a positive difference in our world. With this kind of determination and courage, we can overcome the tzara'at of inaction, silence and powerlessness. Amen.

### Metzarah Study Questions

1. Have you ever been in a home, situation or relationship that was toxic that you had no choice but to destroy it and start over?
2. How do you think we can observe the laws of niddah (marital purity) in our modern day?
3. What is the meaning of 'ezer k'negdo'? Is this an inferior position? Does being a submissive wife mean being a doormat for everyone to walk on?
4. Do you accept that God has maternal as well as paternal qualities?
5. Do you believe that celibacy is a higher spiritual state than marriage? Why or why not?
6. Could you explain the laws of niddah? Do you think that they can help marriages and families in our modern culture and society? How do the laws of niddah help keep the marriage relationship fresh and new rather than stale and boring?
7. Are you offended by the idea that the Torah says a woman is considered 'unclean' (tameh) during her menstrual cycle? What is the real meaning of the word tameh?
8. What other sexual practices are prohibited in Torah?
9. Are you now (or have you ever been) in a situation in which you feel 'stuck'? Do you feel like you're just sitting around until you die? Share and discuss.
10. Have you ever felt (or do you now feel) like doing something crazy to break out of this situation? What stops you? Share and Discuss
11. Have you ever experienced a time when God used pain or crisis to push you out of one place into something new?
12. Is there a risk you would love to take but are afraid to step out and do it? Why?
13. Do you believe that your difficult situation could change suddenly for the better?
14. As a Messianic believer do you ever feel like a leper or outcast from your family or community? Are you ever treated as one?
15. What does the story of the four lepers in this haftarah teach us?

About the Author:

Hannah Neshar grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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